

## Book Reviews

**FROM CHILDHOOD TO CHIVALRY: THE EDUCATION OF THE ENGLISH KINGS AND ARISTOCRACY 1066-1530.** Nicholas Orme. Methuen, 1984. £22.50.

In his latest book, Nicholas Orme continues his investigation of medieval education by turning to the childhood and training of the upper classes, defined here to include the gentry, although the emphasis is, inevitably, on the aristocracy. There are chapters devoted to growing up at home and away, the various elements in the aristocratic curriculum and the handbooks produced to advise both educators and educated. In a concluding chapter, Orme turns his attention to the sixteenth century and argues convincingly that 'Renaissance' ideals of education in England owed more to medieval antecedents than has sometimes been supposed. The range of the book is therefore wide, but at the price of a rather superficial approach. On an anecdotal level there is much to enjoy, including a little-publicised episode in the career of Sir Lancelot — shot in the backside by a huntress in Windsor Forest; a story which Orme uses to support his contention that women participated in some sports (although, as he points out, it also suggests that male observers believed women were bad shots — the lady was aiming at a hind). Other highlights include the infant nationalist Thomas of Brotherton, son of Edward I, who sucked up the milk of his French nurse but flourished on English milk.

The Brotherton example, however, points to one of the shortcomings of the book. It is one of a group of examples which Orme uses to demonstrate that wet nurses were used in the middle ages. But several of the illustrations hint at a persistent contemporary belief that something of the nurse passed into the child with the milk. The literary corollary of this, not mentioned directly by Orme, is that outstanding individuals are often stated to have been suckled by noblewoman or in some other special way (by wolves, for instance). Given this, it needs to be explained why families relied on wet nurses of a lower social class than the child. More basic questions, too, are not fully answered. Although the book discusses what students got from education in the sense of what they learnt, Orme does not, for instance, have much to say about education as a method of social

advancement. The aristocracy may not have needed to see it in those terms, but the gentry (who are included in the scope of the book) almost certainly did. In 1461, for instance, Sir John Hedlam of Nunthorpe (Yorks.) wanted the money left after his debts had been paid to be used for his childrens' education, 'for thai have no nother gudes to helpe tham with bot if god will of his mercy prefer tham in Conyng [learning] to the which I beseke god increse thame'.

Some of the individual examples, too, would have benefited from fuller discussion. To illustrate his point that the office of mistress of the nursery in noble families was held by women of standing, Orme cites Margaret Hexstall 'gentlewoman', who was in charge of the children of the Duke of Buckingham in 1502. He does not add, although it would have strengthened his point, that Margaret came from a family who had been supplying high-level officers for the ducal administration since the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Readers of *The Ricardian* will spot a similar example on page 105, where Orme's discussion of Peter Idley, author of moral instructions for his son in the 1450s, could usefully have mentioned that Idley's widow, Anne, was subsequently mistress of the nursery in the household of the Duke of Gloucester.<sup>4</sup> Here, additional detail would not have modified the author's point; elsewhere it would. For instance, in his treatment of the will of Sir John Pilkington Orme is content to assume that his son, as Sir John asked, entered the household of William Lord Hastings. Orme comments that if he was still there in 1483 his education must have been disrupted (p.56). In fact, the child's wardship was given to Gloucester, not Hastings, and the boy was in Richard's household in the summer of 1483, when money was spent on him there.<sup>5</sup>

Such examples strengthen the impression of a cursory survey. On the matter of the educational attainments of the medieval nobility, for instance, Orme has not superseded K. B. McFarlane's essay — from which, indeed, he draws several of his most telling illustrations.<sup>6</sup> Orme has laid down a broad framework for further study of this important subject, but a more thorough trawl for material and a more sophisticated analysis of its significance are still needed.

1. Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, Probate Register 2, f.451.

2. Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521* (Cambridge 1978), pp.71-2, 81-3, 195, 212, 222.

3. Anne F. Sutton, Anne and Peter Idley in *Research Notes and Queries, Ricardian*, vol. 5, no. 74, September 1981, p.402.

4. *CPR, 1476-85*, p.226; Rosemary Horrox and P. W. Hammond, *BL Harleian MS 433* (4 vols., 1979-83), vol. 2, p.25. The latter also gives brief hints of the education of Richard's own son.

5. In, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford 1973).

ROSEMARY HORROX

**TIRANT LO BLANC.** Translated by David H. Rosenthal. 1984. Macmillan, £9.95.

It is almost five hundred years since Sir Martí Joan de Galba completed the story of Tirant Lo Blanc, begun by Sir Joanot Martorell, and had it published in Valencia. Since then, it has laboured under the limitations of being available in

Catalan, Castilian (1511) and Italian (1538). Its English translator, David H. Rosenthal, has at last rescued it from its unusual unwarranted obscurity.

The story falls into three main sections — the exploits of William of Warwick; Tirant's successes in Sicily and Rhodes; and finally, the largest part examining Tirant's efforts to save Byzantium. It is a massive volume encompassing endless accounts of jousts and battles, the wooing of peerless damsels and the celebrating of vast and sumptuous feasts. It is a book of extremes: extravagant rejoicing turns to deadly mourning with weeping and tearing of hair; peace and security are shattered in an instant by bombards and sieges from a succession of mortal enemies; and scenes of endless wealth are suddenly followed by poverty and hardship. Yet for all this Tirant has, as his translator claims, the feel of a 'modern novel' — a factor which sets it apart from the Arthurian Romance of which, of course, it is reminiscent.

The account of William of Warwick comes from a well known literary source — an Anglo-Norman romance *Guy of Warwick*, a French prose version of which was presented by John Talbot to Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou in 1444 or 1445. William, after a victorious and exemplary life, sets out for the Holy Land and from Italy spreads the news of his death. He returns disguised as a hermit and saves England from the army of the King of Canary before retiring to a hermitage. Tirant Lo Blanc now enters, travelling to England to attend the wedding of its King, and here he meets the hermit Earl. The hero of the epic is a Breton knight of noble lineage and during his visit to England Tirant learns the rudiments of chivalry and distinguishes himself at the marriage festivities, as a result of which he is given the Garter. The stage is thus set for the account of his life's achievements. Martorell's account of the founding of the Order of the Garter is of particular interest as it predates what has already been considered the earliest description — that of Polydore Vergil — by some forty years. Martorell is known to have visited England sometime in 1438-39 and may well have heard the story — as one of Tirant's companions asserts — directly from the King.

For Tirant's adventures in Sicily and Rhodes no literary sources can be cited but Catalan and Valencian colonies on Rhodes in the mid-fifteenth century must have kept Martorell well supplied with first-hand accounts of events. Tirant sets out for the Mediterranean in the company of Philip, youngest son of the King of France. He saves the Grand Master of Rhodes from the Saracens and arriving in Sicily takes great pains to advance Philip's suit for the hand of Princess Ricomana.

Such now is Tirant's reputation that the Emperor of Constantinople begs the King of Sicily to send the valiant knight to save the Empire from the Turks. On arrival in Byzantium Tirant is enthralled by the Emperor's daughter, Carmesina, and the bulk of the story is taken up with a mixture of his trial strength with the Turks and his wooing of the Princess. Here we are introduced to the jealous Easy Going Widow who hopes to win Tirant for herself and the witty Pleasure-of-my-Life who strives to assist Tirant to his goal. The knight faces a long wait, hampered both by his own reticence and Carmesina's abiding concern for her virtue and honour, but the successive attempts to cajole or force the Princess are told with much humour.

For all its length the story unfolds at a great pace and is nowhere unduly weighed down with long and boring speeches and formal descriptions. It exhibits

overall a high degree of realism which has been widely commended by its critics since it first appeared. Martorell wrote about a way of life which he himself pursued in some measure, while adhering to the ideals of knighthood. In *Guy of Warwick* he was following the work of Ramon Lull, recently described as one of the best and least propagandist discourses on chivalry. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was a major event which happened in Martorell's lifetime and he was not lacking in historical models for his story. Moreover, his grasp of geography is remarkably accurate and Galba evidently augmented his knowledge by reference to Mandeville's Travels.

For those who enjoy a good story *Tirant* makes for easy and compelling reading and certainly it deserves that place which Rosenthal seeks for it among 'great medieval and Renaissance classics'.

ROWENA E. ARCHER

## Notices of Books and Articles

The following list consists of recent books and articles, mainly published in the last twelve months, although earlier publications may be included. The appearance of an item does not preclude its subsequent review. Items marked by an asterisk are in the Society's Library.

### BOOKS

Richard Beadle and Pamela King (eds.), *York Mystery Plays. A Selection in Modern Spelling*. 288 pages. 1984. Oxford, Clarendon Press, £5.95 (paperback).

Twenty-two plays, with an introduction on the origins and history of the York cycle of plays.

Stanley Boorman (editor), *Studies in the Performance of Late Medieval Music*. 282 pages. 1984. Cambridge University Press, £30.

Collection of papers on fourteenth and fifteenth century music. For the scholar.

G. A. Lester, *Sir John Paston's 'Grete Boke': A descriptive catalogue with an introduction, of British Library MS Lansdowne 285*. 197 pages. 1984. D. S. Brewer, Cambridge, £17.50.

A collection of writings showing Sir John's interest in jousts, chivalry and the conduct of war, with a particular bias towards Burgundy. Detailed and useful analysis.

Angela M. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages. Religion, Marriage and Letters*. 1983. 215 pages. The Harvester Press, Brighton, Sussex.

Describes the teaching of the Church and uses both literary and historical sources to describe theory and actual practice and behaviour. Useful survey and guide with extensive, if select, bibliography.

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Describes the teaching of the Church and uses both literary and historical sources to describe theory and actual practice and behaviour. Useful survey and guide with extensive, if select, bibliography.

John Steane, *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales*. Illustrated. 302 pages. Croom Helm, 1984. £19.95.

Subjects covered include the archaeology of medieval government fortifications, religion, industry, housing, trade and the countryside. Referenced.

## ARTICLES

Elizabeth Hickey, Arms of the Earls of March and Ulster on the tower of the Cathedral of Trim, Ireland, *The Coat of Arms*, volume 5, number 126, 1983, pages 148-152.

These arms were placed on the tower of what was the medieval parish church, not by Richard Duke of York, as frequently stated, but at some date between 1372 and 1425 during the lives of the third, fourth or fifth Earls of March and Ulster.\*

James Petre, Historians and the Role of Castles in the Wars of the Roses, *Fort*, the International Journal of Fortification and Military Architecture, published by The Fortress Study Group, volume 12, 1984, pages 5-9.

Draws attention to the simplistic, sometimes misguided explanations offered by historians since Oman for the relative unimportance of castles in the Wars of the Roses. A critique, with an indication of an alternative interpretation.\*

Ian Rowney, Arbitration in Gentry Disputes of the Later Middle Ages, *History*, volume 97, 1982, pages 367-376.

Examination of arbitration, its processes and the reasons for its popularity. Warns against a too cynical assessment of the participation of lords in arbitration cases.

Ian Rowney, The Curzons of Fifteenth-Century Derbyshire, *The Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, volume 103, 1983, pages 107-117.

General correction to the errors of J. C. Wedgwood, with an account of the family's activities. Thomas and John Curzon were retained by Lord Hastings, the former being killed at Bosworth fighting for Henry Tudor.

## THESES

Lorraine C. Attreed, The English Royal Government and its Relations with the Boroughs of Norwich, York, Exeter and Nottingham, 1377-1509. Ph.D. Harvard University, 1984.

Ian D. Rowney, The Staffordshire Political Community 1440-1500. Ph.D. Keele University, 1981.

## Notes on Contributors

**Rowena E. Archer** has recently completed a D.Phil. thesis at Oxford on the Mowbray Dukes of Norfolk up to 1432. Currently researching the later Mowbray Dukes.

**David Baldwin.** A member of the Society and a chartered secretary. Currently researching 'The Political Influence of Lord William Hastings in the Midland Shires' at Leicester University for a Ph.D.

**Terence York Cocks,** a Lay Canon and Honorary Archivist of Leicester Cathedral. Author of historical and genealogical articles and joint author of a history of the Church in Leicestershire.

**Peter Hammond.** Research Officer of the Society. Co-editor of *The Coronation of Richard III: the Extant Documents*.

**Rosemary E. Horrox.** Co-editor of the Society's edition of *BL. Harleian MS. 433*.

**Jeremy Potter.** Chairman of the Richard III Society since 1971. Author of *Good King Richard?: An Account of Richard III and his Reputation 1483-1983* and of a novel about the fate of the Princes in the Tower, *A Trail of Blood*, which is being reissued this year.

**Gwen Waters** has done considerable research into medieval town life. In 1983 *King Richard's Gloucester* was published to coincide with the celebrations marking the borough's 500th anniversary of the granting of the charter of incorporation by Richard III.

## Contributions to the Ricardian

These are welcomed from all members on any subject relevant to the aims of the Society. These may be illustrated by photographs (glossy prints showing good contrast) or by line drawings. All contributions, including advertisements and letters, must be typewritten, with double spacing and adequate margins, on one side of the paper only. Permission must be obtained for the use of copyright material, but this is not usually necessary for short quotes. References and footnotes must be given in one sequence at the end of the article. They must take a form similar to the following examples:

R. Horrox and P. W. Hammond (eds.), *British Library Manuscript 433* (4 vols. Upminster and London 1979-83), vol. 1, pp.45-6.

Daniel Williams, The hastily drawn up will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485, *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975-6), p.48.

Details need not be given in full for second and subsequent references to the same source.

Contributions for the September 1985 *Ricardian* must reach Anne Sutton, 17 Enfield Cloisters, Fanshaw Street, London N1 6LD, by June 30. This does not apply to articles which should be sent well in advance and can be sent at any time.

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**The Richard III Society: A History**, by George Awdry. Its early years and achievements 1924-74. £1.50 (including p.&p. UK only). Available from the Sales Officer, Miss Anne Smith, 14 Lincoln Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6TJ.

**A Beginner's Guide to Research**, by the Society's Research Sub-Committee. Available from Miss Mary O'Regan, 7 St. Mary's Close, Leeds LS7 3RJ.

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