

BLACKFRIARS

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THE DOMINICANS AT CAMBRIDGE

IT is seventeen years since BLACKFRIARS, then in its infancy, welcomed the return of the Dominicans to Oxford, and it now has the added joy of welcoming the return of the Friar-Preachers to the sister University. It is an interesting coincidence that the original foundation at Cambridge, in 1238, also took place seventeen years after the first foundation at Oxford. Both were suppressed by Henry VIII in 1538, so that Cambridge has been just four centuries without resident Dominicans, though many well-known friars have worked there individually as preachers and lecturers in the last few years. Not a few Cambridge men, moreover, have entered the Order since the suppression in 1538, the most famous being Thomas Heskins who ruled the English Friars as Vicar-Provincial during Elizabeth's reign. He was one of the foremost champions of the Catholic cause and his well-known book, *The Parliament of Christ*, written in defence of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, brought on him the unwelcome attention of the government. About 1566 the authorities were seeking him in Cambridge. One of the succeeding Vicars-General, Cardinal Philip Howard, who did so much for the Province in penal times, was as a youth entered by his parents at St. John's College, Cambridge, but the outbreak of the Civil War between Charles I and the Parliament brought his stay to an abrupt end, his parents sending him for safety into Flanders.

Of the history of the Dominicans in Cambridge before the Reformation we have a great deal of information. It mostly concerns, however, individual friars celebrated in theology, philosophy, scripture and other branches of ecclesiastical study, rather than the Priory as such; and this is to be expected, seeing that Dominican Cambridge did the same work as Dominican Oxford. They were both amongst the six or seven great houses of theology to which Provincials of other Provinces had the right to send students. Names of

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some of the foreign Dominican students at Cambridge can be seen in the episcopal registers of Ely still extant. By no means all the English Dominicans made their studies at Oxford or Cambridge; these houses were only for such students as showed special promise of becoming useful professors; the others went to *studia* of lesser rank such as those of London, King's Langley, Hereford, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Exeter. The average Dominican community at Cambridge numbered between seventy and eighty; that of Oxford between ninety and a hundred.

In a Dominican house of theology such as that at Cambridge we must not expect to find an established and settled community, as in a Benedictine monastery or, for that matter, as in an ordinary pre-reformation Dominican priory where the community was very rarely changed. Thus neither the Oxford nor Cambridge house has a definite corporate history, and both houses might almost be considered as one. Just as St. Albert and St. Thomas went from Paris to Cologne and back, or to Naples and Rome, so also the great English doctors, like William of Alton, William of Hotham and Cardinal Macclesfield, went between Oxford and Paris. Similarly Cambridge's great Dominican professors, Simon of Boraston, Robert Holcot, Thomas Ringstead and John Bromyard, who were amongst the most renowned writers of their day, passed continually from Cambridge to Oxford and back again. This must have gone far to prevent any stupid jealousy between the two communities, without however removing the honest rivalry that is not without value. The best in Oxford went to Cambridge, and the latter in turn gave her best to Oxford, and both gave of their best to Paris, Bologna, and Cologne.

The new house at Cambridge, beautifully designed and constructed in the Italian style and admirably adapted for a small pioneer Dominican community, has been most generously given by Mrs. Bullough, widow of the late Professor Edward Bullough, himself also a devoted friend of the Order. Our readers will join us in our profound confidence that the hopes of these signal benefactors will be realized and that the Cambridge Blackfriars will grow in time to the magnificent stature of its predecessor of pre-reformation days.