

**A REGISTER OF THE PRESIDENTS, FELLOWS,
DEMIES, INSTRUCTORS IN GRAMMAR AND IN
MUSIC, CHAPLAINS, CLERKS, CHORISTERS,
AND OTHER MEMBERS OF SAINT MARY
MAGDALEN COLLEGE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD, VOL. I. THE CHORISTERS**

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A Register of the Presidents, Fellows, Demies, Instructors in Grammar and in Music, Chaplains, Clerks, Choristers, and Other Members of Saint Mary Magdalen College in the University of Oxford, Vol. I. The Choristers by John Rouse Bloxam

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JOHN ROUSE BLOXAM

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PRESIDENTS, FELLOWS, DEMIES,
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OF
SAINT MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY
JOHN ROUSE BLOXAM, D.D.
FELLOW AND LIBRARIAN.

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VOL. I.
THE CHORISTERS.
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OXFORD,
WILLIAM GRAHAM, HIGH STREET.
MDCCLIII.

TO

William Jerome Burdett,

AND

**THE CHORISTERS OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN COLLEGE,
OXFORD**

THIS PORTION OF THE COLLEGE REGISTER

IS DEDICATED WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND

J. R. B.

PREFACE.

He set singers also before the altar, that by their voices they might make sweet melody, and daily sing praises in their songs. *Ecclus. xlvii. 9.*

WHEN the pious Bishop of Winchester, William of Waynflete, founded his College of St. Mary Magdalen, in the University of Oxford, "for the exaltation of the Christian Faith, the advancement of the Church, the increase of Divine worship, and the liberal arts, sciences, and faculties," he ordained that there should be four Chaplains, eight Clerks, and sixteen Choristers, in daily attendance in the College Chapel, in order that "the Divine Offices might, by God's grace, be performed with the greatest devotion, honour, and perfection;" and for the proper instruction of the latter he commanded that, if any one of the Chaplains or Clerks were able to teach them plain song, and other kinds of singing, the President of his College should hire him for that purpose; but should the Chaplains and Clerks all decline to take upon themselves such instruction, that the President should make an agreement with some other well-qualified person in respect to commons and stipend for teaching. He enacted also, that the power of admitting or dismissing the Choristers should belong to the President, and in his absence to the Vice-President; and with regard to their lodging, that they should be distributed separately in the chambers of Fellows or Probationers, who were under the obligation of superintending their morals, behaviour, and scholastic progress, and, if necessary, of making report of their misconduct. Lastly, he ordained, but only in case of the greatest distress and poverty of the College, that the number of the Choristers might be reduced to eight.

Such was the provision made for the Choristers in accordance with the customs of the latter part of the fifteenth cen-

tury. The elementary portion of their education was intrusted to the Instructor in music; and we find that at the Visitation of Bishop Fox in 1507, the following complaint was laid before him, *Instructor Choristarum est negligens in instruendo eos scientiâ et moribus, sed potius divertit eos ad alia negotia*: and in 1519, Robert Perrot, their Instructor in music, is styled "Scholemaster of the Choristers." (Ledger, B. p. 24.) No regulation appears to have been made for their attendance at the grammar-lecture; and it is probable that originally they did not pass the limits of the song-school, unless they became Clerks or Demies, or at least matriculated Members of the University. The number of instances, however, in which in early times Choristars were raised to the class not only of Clerks, but of Demies, was perhaps owing to the special interest taken by the Fellow under whose protection the Boy was plac'd; and for whose kind offices he made a return, by performing those little services, which, till very lately, the younger boys in our public Schools rendered to the elder. Compared with other foundations of the same character, it might perhaps have been said then more truthfully than at the present time,

"Oh! happier they, whose fairer fortune falls
 "By Waynflete's tower, or Wykeham's sainted walls;
 "There watchful eyes are o'er them, kind hearts tend,
 "And every Fellow is the Quire-boy's friend:
 "Till, train'd and tutor'd thoughtfully, ere long
 "The Boy, now made by consecration strong,
 "In some high Minster lifts the priestly song."

Ecclesie Dei. 8vo. (Longman,) London, 1848, p. 23.

Their place of recreation in 1535 is briefly noticed in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (vol. ii. p. 273); *Terræ vocatæ Demaynes adjacentes Collegio, viz. in prato et ambulatorium muratum ubi solent pueri ludere.*

During the times of pestilence, which so frequently afflicted Oxford in the sixteenth century, the Choristers were carefully removed under proper superintendance to Brackley, Harwell, or, as in 1507, to Witney, the Rectorial-house of which was hired for their accommodation.

In the year 1487, a school for the Choristers was built near the Kitchen; and from the peculiar attractions of the latter place we are not surprised to find, that some years later (in 1513) it was deemed advisable by the College, for reasons which may easily be conceived, to build up a wall between the Kitchen and the School. In after times the Boys were taught singing in a curious watch-tower of three stories, called "the Vyse," which was built by the Founder in the year 1473, near the stream of the Cherwell running between the Grove and the Waterwalks. It may be observed in the plan of Oxford made by Aggas in the year 1578, where it is styled the "Songe Schoole." It was also the Organist's abode. It was destroyed to make room for the "New Buildings" in February 1738-4*. Since that time the Choristers have received their musical instruction occasionally in the Antechapel, by no means a desirable place for the purpose, and for some years past in a room on the west side of the Tower^b.

In 1481, fourpence per week was paid for the allocation or commons of each Chorister. In addition to which, as they waited in hall at the tables of the Senior and Junior Fellows, they probably partook of the fragments left at dinner and supper. The eight senior Choristers waited at the High Table, and the eight junior at the Masters' Table, till the commencement of the present century. They still continue this office, as a matter of form, on the Gaudy-day in July.

* Hearne's Diary, A. D. 1738-4. Feb. 21. Thursday. "Last week, the Organist's house, commonly called the music-school-house, on the north side of Magdalen College, at a little distance from the College, just by the water side, being on the west side of the water, was pulled down on account of the new additional part, that is now erecting, of the College."

^b A good lofty music-school within the College, not far from the Chapel and the Organist's apartments, and fitted up with desks and shelves for music-books, is still a *desideratum*. It would also be an admirable improvement if the whole of the room, now used by the Chaplains, Clerks, and Choristers, for putting on their surplices, could be made available for that purpose, instead of one dark narrow portion of it, the inconveniences of which are daily manifest.

In early time, their common garb, or *liberata*, as it was called, consisted of a long gown of dark cloth, containing two yards and a half, and which cost five shillings. (vide p. 4.) This dress must have been very similar to that of the blue-coat boys of Christ's Hospital in the present day. The venerable President still remembers the time, when the Choristers appeared bare-headed in College, like Undergraduates of the sixteenth century^c. Their present gown is that of a Bachelor of Arts, according to a regulation reported to have been made or revived by that eminent musician, Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church from 1689 to 1711. But, if matriculated, they wear the large-sleeved gowns of Scholars, following the rule put forth by University authority in Lent Term, 1770; *Choristers to wear Scholars' gowns and square caps without tufts*^d.

The vestments worn by the Choristers in Choir, so long as "The Use of Sarum" was retained, were Albs, Surplices, and Tunicles. This appears by an Inventory of the vestments, books, and ornaments of the College Chapel, drawn up in 1496 by the Sacristan, Thomas Goff, which contains the following *pro pueris*.

Item duas tunicas rubeas cum orfreyis de damask et velosti glauco.

Item unam tunicam rubeam cum orfreyis de blodio velveti.

Item aliam tunicam rubeam de tartrow.

Item tres tunicas albas unius secte.

Item tres tunicas blodias pro pueris cum stellis affixis.

Item vexillum de Sancto Nicholao.

And also from the annual expenses of the Chapel in the Libri Computi, in which we frequently find such entries as these;

Solutum pro factura superpelliciorum pro Chorustis, 11^s.

Solutum pro coloryng octo superpelliciorum pro Chorustis, xvii^d.

Solutum pro by parelyng sex albarum pro Chorustis.

L. C. 1520.

^c *Etsi multis transactis annis consuetudo fuerit prescripta Scholaribus, ut non velato, nec in Collegio, nec in oppido, incederent capite, tamen diversis de causis nobis visum est ipsis concedere, ut in oppido pileum uti possint, hac lege, ut in Collegio veteri non sint liberi consuetudine.* Reg. Coll. Exon. 1 Mar. 1568.

^d See *Remarks on Strictures lately published upon the Statute, Tit. xiv. DE VESTITU ET HABITU SCHOLASTICO.* 8vo. Oxford, 1770.

The Albs were made of linen, and reached down to the heels; they were confined by a girdle, and decorated with apparels embroidered with ornaments or sacred imagery. These apparels were either sewn entirely round the bottom of the skirt, and lower part of the sleeve, or consisted of small square pieces fastened to the same portions of the garment, and which symbolized the bloody wounds of our blessed Lord. The Albs were worn by those boys of the Choir, whose turn it was to serve as acolytes, thurifers, or torch-bearers at the elevation at High Mass: and by all the Choristers in the solemn Processions round the Cloisters.

The Tunicles were worn by the acolytes, candle-bearers, and thurifers on High Festivals over their apparelled Albs.

The Surplices were very much like those worn at present, except that they were closed in front, but with a circular hole in the middle for the head to pass through; which aperture was curiously coloured or ornamented with elegantly-wrought needlework, done sometimes in scarlet, but more frequently in dark blue thread.

When the religious changes took place in the middle of the sixteenth century, and the Ritual of St. Osmund was abolished for ever, away went Alb and Tunicle and Surplice. Even this latter vesture was proscribed by a President*, whose puritanical scruples were offended alike by Ecclesiastical vestment or Academical costume; and it was not till the year 1685, that, by the earnest persuasion of the Visitor, Bishop Cooper, he allowed the Surplice to reappear in the College Chapel.

* Dr. Lawrence Humphrey, President from 1561 to 1590. He and others were cited before Archbishop Parker, for refusing the Ecclesiastical habits, and received the following order; "to wear the cap appointed by injunction, to wear no hats with their long gowns, to wear surplices with hoods in the Quires of their Colleges according to the ancient manner there, and to communicate kneeling in wafer-bread." Not complying with these regulations, he was imprisoned, but by great interest soon set at liberty. In 1586, Queen Elizabeth, on her visit to Oxford, seeing him in his proper Doctorial robes, said to him, "Dr. Humphrey, methinks this gown and habit become you very well, and I marvel that you are so straitlaced on this point; but I come not now to chide."