

JOHN BRINSLEY AND HIS FRIENDS:  
Scholarship in seventeenth-century  
Leicestershire

by

VIVIAN SALMON

John Brinsley is known to historians of education as the author of a comprehensive course—probably the earliest in Britain—on language teaching, and as a pioneer in the teaching of the vernacular in grammar schools. He is also known to local historians as headmaster of Ashby-de-la-Zouch grammar school in the early years of the seventeenth century, and to students of theological history as the author of a number of Puritan devotional works. His linguistic achievements and teaching methods have been described elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> but there is little information available about his personal life; the account in the Dictionary of National Biography records the views of one of his pupils on his abilities as a teacher, and Fox adds details of his marriage and of expenditure at Ashby School as shown in the feofees accounts. But Brinsley deserves to be better known, both as a teacher of extraordinary humanity and enlightenment, and as the associate and friend of a number of important and interesting figures in the social and cultural life of Leicestershire in the early seventeenth century.

The *DNB* does not cite the date of Brinsley's birth nor the place of his upbringing, but there are four pieces of evidence which make it possible to trace them with fair certainty. First, the existence in Nottinghamshire of a village named Brinsley from which it is likely that families of the same name originated; secondly, the particular spelling of his name which was used by Brinsley as a young man; thirdly, the area in which Brinsley first took up employment after graduation; and finally, the date of his matriculation at Cambridge.

By the sixteenth century, the village of Brinsley had given its name to the family of the local landowners<sup>2</sup> as well as to several other families who had settled in North Leicestershire, South Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire. The name rarely occurs elsewhere in local records, and even the London family of Brinley or Brinsley, noted in the Heralds' visitation of 1633, originated in Staffordshire.<sup>3</sup> The evidence suggests, therefore, that Brinsley's family lived somewhere in the North Midlands. A second clue is the variant spelling of his name which Brinsley used on entering university; this was "Bringley",<sup>4</sup> other forms which occur being *Brinley*, *Brindley*, and *Brindgley*. *Bringley* is recorded far less frequently than the others, and was, in fact,

euen the meanest both Maisters and Scholars may proceede with delight, and all good Learning may goe happily forward".<sup>17</sup> Johnson could have become acquainted with Brinsley through their common friendship with Chaderton, to whom he sent his son Abraham to be educated at the unusually early age of thirteen.<sup>18</sup> Johnson, who was Archdeacon of Leicester (1591-1625) is best known as the founder in the 1580's of two famous public schools, Oakham and Uppingham, and his interest in education led him to act as patron to others as well as Brinsley. Among them was John Leech, in whose *Book of grammar questions for the help of young scholars* he acknowledges, in a dedicatory epistle, his debt to Johnson.<sup>19</sup> Leech's work was one of the texts used as a model by Brinsley, the latter acknowledging himself "beholden for the rule of construing and translating, in the beginning of my Schoole labours . . . to the reuerend and ancient Schoole-maister, Maister Leech".<sup>20</sup>

Another contemporary of Brinsley's at Cambridge, though rather older, was a friend whose assistance also elicited an expression of gratitude from Brinsley. This was Anthony Hunton, who graduated B.A. from Christ's in 1589, and M.A. in 1590. He went on to become a licentiate in medicine (1589), then lecturer in medicine (1606) at Gresham College, and a member of the Royal College of Physicians. From the early 1590's he also practised in Newark, where he died in 1624.<sup>21</sup> Brinsley thanks him for assistance of a different kind, acknowledging that he owes him "euen mine owne selfe and all my later trauels". He describes how he had been overcome by a depressive illness; his life had become "most miserable and a burden vnto me, by changing the best humors of my bodie into lumpish melancholy". So serious was this "heauie dumpishnesse" that he was rendered "vnfit for my calling", and it was due solely to Hunton that he could once more "reioice in all my labours, and especially in my calling".<sup>22</sup> Without Hunton, it seems, Brinsley might never have succeeded in publishing the method of language teaching which was to prove so beneficial to the schools of the seventeenth century.

Other men who were at Christ's at about the same time as Brinsley helped him in his career in more conventional ways. John Ireton was a Fellow of Christ's who took his M.A. in 1572 and became B.D. in 1579, being appointed to the living of Kegworth (in the gift of Christ's) in 1583.<sup>23</sup> By 1591 Brinsley had joined him as his curate,<sup>24</sup> and thereafter spent several happy and fruitful years with him, acting also as master of the small school which had been established in the churchyard since 1575.<sup>25</sup> Many years later he acknowledged "the aduice and direction of one in whose house I liued, who was well knowne to be inferiour to few in all excellent learning, and euen in this kinde amongst other", and in the margin he names "Master *John Ireton of Kegworth*".<sup>26</sup> Ireton's interest in Brinsley's work was based on a profound belief in the value of education; as Brinsley explains, "I cannot but oft thinke of the speech of a worthy learned man whom Cambridge in his time much reuerenced, who hauing laboured many yeares with little fruite, amongst a blinde, and superstitious people, was wont much to lament, that he was enforced to labour in a barren soyle where salt had been sowed: whence he vsed to affirme that the chiefe hope of Gods church for all such pleaces so nuzled vp in rudenesse and superstition, was to come out of our Grammar

schooles. And indeede for bringing men vnto ciuility, the very heathens saw this to be the onely way".<sup>27</sup>

After a period at Kegworth, Brinsley was assisted in his career by yet another Cambridge acquaintance, Arthur Hildersham, who entered Christ's in 1578, becoming a Fellow in 1583. Hildersham's life as an undergraduate had not been a happy one. Two years after his arrival in Cambridge, his father removed him from the university in order to send him to Rome so that he might be converted to Catholicism. On his refusing to go, Hildersham was disinherited and left without means to continue his university course. In London, however, he met John Ireton, who heard his story with sympathy and took him to a potential benefactor, Henry Hastings, third Earl of Huntingdon, and a distant relation of Ireton's. Hastings provided financial support at Cambridge—as, perhaps, he was later to do for Brinsley—and after he had graduated, appointed him to a lectureship at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. This was in 1587; in 1593 Hildersham was presented to the living of Ashby, and in 1600 became a prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral.<sup>28</sup> Hildersham was one of the leaders of the Puritans in the early years of the century, becoming a prominent member of the campaign for an ecclesiastical conference which involved the drawing up, and collecting of signatures for, petitions in several counties, which were given to influential local gentry to present at court.<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising that Hildersham should welcome as his curate a member of his own College, who shared his Puritan views; in 1600 Brinsley was appointed both assistant to Hildersham and headmaster of Ashby school.

Before any account is given of Brinsley's time at Ashby, mention must be made of three other Cambridge men who were to prove helpful to him in later years. One was Edward Elton, who declared in a "Commendatorie epistle" to Brinsley's last religious work, "I have knowne him from my childhood, being borne neere unto him, brought up in the same Grammar Schoole, and after, in the same Colledge in *Cambridge*, and ever since beene most familiarly acquainted with him".<sup>30</sup> Elton, who had graduated in 1589, was Rector of Thorpe-in-Glebis (Nottingham)—some fifteen miles from Ashby—when Brinsley first took up his new post, although he moved to London in 1606.<sup>31</sup> Another graduate of Christ's who played an important, though brief, role in Brinsley's life was William Haine. Their relationship was not that of friends, but of colleagues, the older man giving Brinsley advice and a practical demonstration of his own teaching methods. Haine, a master at Merchant Taylors' School, had acquired enough of a reputation as a teacher for Brinsley to make the long journey to London to consult him. As Haine notes: "Maister *Brinsly*, in the yeare one thousand sixe hundred and foue, (vpon a report made by certaine very learned and reuerend Ministers,) . . . [came] from his school in Lecester-shire, to London, of purpose, as he saide, to know this course of teaching . . . he, I say, hath . . . laboured very much in this kinde". The reference to "this kinde" is to Haine's method of Latin teaching, which is explained in the preface to a text-book which he published in 1611.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, among the friends whom Brinsley might have met at Cambridge, or through Cambridge contacts, was a man who was to become more than a

friend—Joseph Hall, whose sister Barbara Brinsley married at Loughborough, on 19 April 1598.<sup>33</sup> Joseph Hall was born at Ashby in 1574, educated at Ashby school, and sent to Emmanuel College in 1591 at the express wish of Nathaniel Gilbey, who became his tutor.<sup>34</sup> There Hall was not only the pupil of Lawrence Chaderton, but also the contemporary of Abraham Johnson; through either of these Hall and Brinsley could have become acquainted, living as they did within a few miles of one another in Leicestershire. The two men seem to have been on very close terms with each other. In 1612 Hall wrote “A commendatory preface” to Brinsley’s first educational publication *Ludus Literarius*, speaking warmly of the efforts of “one so well deserving”,<sup>35</sup> and he addressed one of his published “epistles” in 1608 to “Master I.B.” concerning “A complaint of the mis-education of our Gentry”.<sup>36</sup> Brinsley, in turn, addressed his third publication, *Cato translated grammatically* (also 1612) to “My Reverend and worthy *Brother, Mr. Doctour Hall*”, asking him to “trie, whether it be in all things, according to the worth, which I haue conceiued of it, for carrying-on the little ones in so plaine and so pleasant a way to all good learning”. He also acknowledges Hall’s share in the work, saying “that you haue not refused to put-to your helping hand to the worke, perusing, and adding some of your owne experiments”.<sup>37</sup> It was no doubt because Hall had become in 1608 one of the chaplains to Prince Henry, elder son of James I, that Brinsley was able to dedicate to him and to his brother Charles the *Ludus Literarius*, describing himself as the princes’ “deuoted and most affectionate poore seruant”.

On moving to Ashby after his marriage, Brinsley found himself in a more secure financial situation for bringing up a family. His stipend at Kegworth had been only £8.13.6 per annum;<sup>38</sup> at Ashby it was £14, which was raised to £15 in October 1606.<sup>39</sup> Although the man who was probably his first benefactor, the “Puritan Earl”, had died in 1595, Brinsley still enjoyed the friendship and patronage of his family, as many references in his writings show. His first publication, a devotional work, was dedicated to Henry, the fifth earl, in gratitude for “the exceeding fauours, wherewith I and mine are bound vnto your house for euer”;<sup>40</sup> and a continuation of this work is offered to Henry’s Countess, the Lady Elizabeth, with his “dutifull and thankfull affection”.<sup>41</sup> To their son, the young Ferdinando, Brinsley offers his first book of translations, pointing out that “I haue ingaged my selfe to your most honourable Parents, by publicke acknowledgement of the bond of my duety, for their many fauours . . . all my schoole labours . . . haue beene of later yeers, more especially intended for your Lordship about others”.<sup>42</sup> Although this remark seems to imply that Brinsley was tutor in the Hastings family, it could not have been the case when this dedication was written, since Brinsley then explains that, for “the manner of the vse” of the textbook, he refers Ferdinando’s “director” to the *Ludus Literarius*. Even when he had left Ashby Brinsley continued to feel gratitude to the family of his benefactors; in 1620, some two years after his departure, he dedicated another work to Sir George Hastings, brother of the fifth earl, expressing his special gratitude for maintaining poor scholars at the university. “I yet still desire”, he wrote, “as I ought, that memorable loue of yours to be knowne”.<sup>43</sup> Brinsley may

have been referring to his pupils at Ashby, many of whom went on to university; or he may have had in mind his eldest son, John, who went to Emmanuel in 1616. In 1624, Brinsley dedicated the last of his translations to a distant kinsman of Sir George, Sir John Harpur, who had married the daughter of a landowner in Belton, Barbara Beaumont (niece of the dramatist). In the dedication, Brinsley thanks Sir John for the "loue which you have shewed towards the furtherance of my indeuors for the Grammar-School".<sup>44</sup> Of the fifth earl, Brinsley states more particularly, that he, together with Archdeacon Johnson, had "somewhat supported me to goe through with this so weightie a businesse . . . Who haue not thought it enough to found or bestow the places, and to endow them with meete maintenance, vnlesse they shall also do what may be to leaue in them the best meanes of all good instruction and education".<sup>45</sup>

Brinsley arrived at Ashby in 1600, the first payment of salary being made to him on 21 December 1600 (apparently in arrear) for six months' employment at the school;<sup>46</sup> he also acted, not only as curate to Hildersham, but also as a licensed preacher.<sup>47</sup> His life was not altogether a happy and peaceful one, since he experienced difficulties both with his bishop and with the feoffees of the school lands. On 3 October 1604 he was called before the bishop to explain his refusal to wear a surplice or to make the sign of the cross, and together with three others, was suspended on 1 December from officiating as a curate, although he was allowed to continue as schoolmaster.<sup>48</sup> His non-conformity led him into difficulties with some of his parishioners. In 1606 one Richard Spencer "cominge to Mr. Brinsley late curate of Ashby . . . to publish . . . in the churche certaine money of his . . . which was taken owt of his house . . . when . . . on fire" was reproached by Brinsley in these words: "Nay, nay, the crosse hath lighte on the, and a wors judgement hangeth ouer thy head, thow wilte haue thy children baptised with the crosse".<sup>49</sup> According to one of Brinsley's pupils, it was the Bishop's hostility which eventually led to his departure from Ashby; he was "enforced from keeping school, being persecuted by the Bishop's officers".<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, he was allowed to publish a number of religious works, the first of which was entitled *The true watch, and rule of life, or a direction for the examination of our spirituall estate*. The first edition appeared in 1606; a fifth in 1611, a sixth enlarged edition in 1614, a seventh in 1615 and an eighth in 1619. What seems to have been the last edition was published in 1637. Unreadable as it now appears, if only by virtue of its extreme length and its rhapsodic style, it seems to have evoked a favourable response at the time, and we know of at least one reader on whom it had a profound effect.<sup>51</sup> Brinsley later published second, third and fourth parts of *The true watch* in 1607, 1622 and 1624; the third, five hundred pages long, went into at least two editions.

With the feoffees of the school lands Brinsley had material rather than spiritual difficulties. The school, which had been founded by the third Earl of Huntingdon in 1567, received a regular income from the rents of lands with which it had been endowed by the earl and other early benefactors. The income was enough to employ a clerk and an usher to assist Brinsley, but the extent to which it was intended to pay for the equipment and upkeep

of the school was a matter for dispute. In 1606 the feoffees agreed to allow Brinsley 20 shillings towards the repair of one side of the school house, and decided that from time to time thereafter, the feoffees should repair the building "soe farr as the school reacheth; and that Mr Brinsly himself shall repair it, soe farr as his own dwelling house goeth". In 1608 he was allowed £1 for repairs, and 7s. 3d. towards the charge for "fasning the boks that are given to the school, unto ther deskes"; but when the fabric of the school needed attention again in 1616 they agreed only very reluctantly to "take order for the repaire of the school-house", allowing Brinsley "for this tyme 30s. . . . as a meer benevolence and gratuity".<sup>52</sup>

Even greater anxieties which Brinsley had to endure were the illness and death of his wife, which were perhaps the immediate cause of the depression for which Anthony Hunton so successfully treated him. It seems that Barbara Brinsley's illness was also mental rather than physical, at least initially, since in the preface to a work published in 1612, Brinsley refers to her "long and wearie combate of so many yeeres together, against the manifolde terrours, assaults and tortures of the bloody Enemy". Happily, Brinsley was able to console himself with the thought that the Lord had "vouchsafed . . . a most glorious victorie; and translating her unto his throne, from all the malice of the Dragon, gaue vnto her the Crowne of life". He was also comforted by the support which his wife's brother, Joseph Hall, had given them, inspired by what Brinsley describes as his "true and sound affection". Not only, he said, did he comfort her by his "tenderest Letters" in private, but also "publikelie in that most sweet Epistle, which hath been for the comfort of many a fainting soule".<sup>53</sup> This "epistle" was addressed "To my sister, Mrs. B. Brinsley of the Sorrow not to be repented of" and it is intended to comfort her, and others who might read the collection in which it appears, and relieve them of their feelings of guilt and sorrow at not grieving sufficiently for their sins.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps one reason for Barbara Brinsley's distress was her frequent pregnancies. John, the eldest son, was born in 1601, and there are five other entries of Brinsley baptisms in the Ashby register before her own death is recorded in December 1610. Brinsley's second marriage must have taken place away from Ashby, but it is clear that he remarried by 1614, since the birth of further children is recorded in 1615 and 1617. Of Brinsley's eight children (five boys, three girls) it appears from the Ashby burial register that only five survived until the family left the town.

In addition to these private difficulties, Brinsley suffered, in common with the other inhabitants of Ashby, from the social problems of the times. In 1602 and 1603, as he notes in one of his devotional works, they were afflicted with plague; in 1605 they were threatened by that "bloudie Powder treason"; and when the second part of *The true watch* appeared in 1607 it was "in the midst of the last apparent danger, which we in our parts were in, for the insurrection about Inclosures: which howsoever it might seeme nothing, or small to them who dwelt farre from it; yet to us who expected the approaching of the rebels every houre, and heard how the hearts of the people were generally bent, it was no lesse terrible . . . the neerer it was".<sup>55</sup>

With so many personal and public anxieties, it is astonishing that Brinsley was able to devote himself, as he did, to the production of a comprehensive language-teaching course based on his own teaching experience at Ashby, and to display so much enterprise and energy in consulting others, either by discussing with them the drafts of his books for the sake of "their helpe and direction",<sup>56</sup> or by visiting them to watch their teaching methods in operation. Chaderton read and commented on his manuscripts; Robert Johnson gave his "graue aduise"; Hall gave a "helping hand", reading manuscripts and adding comments from his own experience.<sup>57</sup> Brinsley also consulted a noted scholar and teacher, "Master Tovey", who was the tutor of Sir John Harington (1592-1614). Tovey had been master of the free school at Guildford before his employment with the Harington family; he shared much of the credit for his pupil's ability to speak four foreign languages—Latin, Greek, French and Italian—at an early age, and it was natural that Brinsley should consult him when they met at Sir John's "commencement".<sup>58</sup> Brinsley describes his conversation with Tovey: "I desired to know this of him: that whereas I had writ vnto him formerly, to haue taken some paines, in setting downe the shortest and best way of teaching, according to his experience . . . that he would vouchsafe to impart vnto me, in a word or two, what were the principall meanes he had vsed thereto". Tovey's reply is given in some detail (including the somewhat ambiguous statement that it was done by prayer), and Brinsley, ever ready to learn from others, notes how he had "set myselfe to put all these [ideas] in practise, yet more seriously then formerly I had done".<sup>59</sup>

Brinsley's success as a schoolmaster is attested by William Lilly, who joined Ashby school in 1613. He describes him as of "great abilities for instruction of youth in the Latin and Greek tongues; he was very severe in his life and conversation, and did breed up many scholars for the universities".<sup>60</sup> If this portrait by Lilly sounds forbidding, it may be balanced by Brinsley's frequent pleas for making school a place of happiness for children, with the emphasis on reward rather than punishment. His own attitude to teaching is exemplified in the ideas of Philoponus, who apparently represents Brinsley in the dialogue between two schoolmasters on which *Ludus Literarius* is based. Admitting his own earlier acquaintance with the "griefes and vexations" to which the other speaker refers, and which accompany the "moyling and drudging life, without any fruite to speake of" which is the lot of so many teachers, Brinsley/Philoponus explains that "since I set my selfe more conscionably and earnestly to seeke out the best waies of teaching, by inquiring, conferring and practicing constantly all the most likely courses, which I could heare or deuise, God hath granted vnto mee, to finde so great contentation and ioy of this same labour in my schoole, that . . . I can take ordinarilie more true delight and pleasure in following my children . . . then anie one can take in following hawkes and hounds, or in any other the pleasantest recreation". He continues: "Let the schoole be made vnto them a place of play: and the children drawne on by that pleasant delight which ought to be, it can then no more hinder their growth then their play doth, but rather further it, when they sit at their ease".<sup>61</sup>

Brinsley's first work on language-teaching methods was published in 1612 (*Ludus*), and was followed by a set of textbooks which were translations, in a special format, of works prescribed in the school statutes of 1575.<sup>62</sup> The text was printed in four columns, the first containing a resumé of the content, the second a literal translation, the third a good English translation and the fourth explanatory notes on names, figures of speech, etc. (The first texts to be printed were in a rather simpler form.) These books were intended to enable children to study privately, or with the assistance of older pupils, while the master was busy with the upper forms; the usher was engaged with the smallest children, teaching them the elements of Latin or even improving their writing of the vernacular. *Ludus* was followed by a grammar, *The Posing of the Parts*, which continued to be reprinted until 1687. Six "grammatical translations" appeared between 1612 and 1618, attracting the support of the same publisher, Thomas Man, throughout.

On 1 November 1617 Brinsley's salary as schoolmaster of Ashby was paid to him for the last time.<sup>63</sup> As Lilly reports, he was "persecuted by the Bishop's officers", and details of the case appear in the records of the courts of correction which were held following the Archdeacon's Visitation at Easter 1617 and the Bishop's in August of the same year. Complaints seem to have been made not only by Richard Spencer, but also by one Martha Heape; nevertheless, Brinsley's request that he should be allowed to draw his Michaelmas stipend was granted.<sup>64</sup> On arriving in London, he might have found at least a temporary lodging with any one of a number of friends. One of these was Sir William Cavendish, M.P. for Derby, who was well known for his hospitality at his house in Bishopsgate, and who had already received Brinsley's thanks for "his honourable bounty, for the encouraging of me, to the accomplishment of my promise for my Grammaticall translations".<sup>65</sup> Another was perhaps the Matthew Brinsley whose daughter Susanna was baptized at Ashby on 1 February 1600, and who may have moved to Clerkenwell.<sup>66</sup> There was also Edward Elton, now the incumbent of St. Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey, who wrote so admiringly of Brinsley in 1622, pointing out "his owne faithfull and happy labours [which] have so long agoe commended him, and made him & his holy affection for the good of all, so well knowne to the Church of God".<sup>67</sup> When he made his will, in 1624, Elton named as the overseers his "loving friends" Brinsley and Richard Sibbes, the famous Puritan divine.<sup>68</sup>

Brinsley published two further grammatical translations, one in 1620 and the other in 1624. He also published a dictionary in 1630. More important was a further work on educational theory, *A consolation for our grammar schools* (1622), published once again by Thomas Man. Brinsley is concerned that, only too often, pupils enter the universities from grammar school with no "sense of the meaning and true vse of learning"; of their lack of preparation for university work (pp. 8-9) "the complaints of the worthiest and most carefull Tutors in the Vniuersities giue too sufficient testimonie". After a general discussion of educational problems of the time, Brinsley lists "Such things as may (by Gods blessing) be easily effected in our ordinarie Grammar schooles" (pp. 52-58) and then "Helps for attaining to those things mentioned

in the Contents" (pp. 59-80)—a bibliography of great interest for those concerned with the history of education. The effectiveness of Brinsley's methods is attested by the final "Examiners Censure" of 16 March 1620/21; the examiners, James Ussher "Doctour and Professor of Diuinitie in the Vniuersitie of *Dublin*" and Daniel Featly, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, testify that they have "found so much content in euery forme, from the lowest to the highest . . . as perswaded vs of the trueth of whatsoever he hath written concerning the same". Brinsley needed such a seal of approval because this work, he hoped, would be accepted by the Virginia Company as a guide in planning courses at their projected free school in the colony. Brinsley submitted the manuscript to the company, which considered it at a meeting on 19 December 1621. A committee was appointed to examine it, but in spite of reminders, does not seem to have reported; and the project of a free school was temporarily dropped after an Indian massacre at Charles City.<sup>69</sup> When the work was eventually published, by Thomas Man, it was dedicated to "all . . . Gouernors within his Maiesties dominions, to whom the charge and care of Schooles; namely, those of the inferiour sort, are assigned" and the Virginia company is listed as only one of a number of "Gouernors" whose interest is solicited.

Brinsley's greatest success, however, was the reissue, in 1627, of *Ludus Literarius*. Thomas Man had no share in the enterprise on this occasion; it was brought out by no fewer than five different publishers. The device of multiple publication was adopted where large numbers of books were to be produced (an edition normally being limited to 1,000 copies). Such a reissue represented a public acknowledgement of the value of Brinsley's ideas on language teaching, and was a fitting culmination of his life's work.

Brinsley's eldest son, John, was ordained in London on 17 March 1623 and appointed to a living in Great Yarmouth.<sup>70</sup> He shared his father's non-conformist views, was a prolific writer of religious tracts and a noted preacher. He died in 1665. His eldest son, Robert, entered the medical profession, graduating from Leyden with a thesis on scurvy.<sup>71</sup>

It has not been possible to discover the date or place of Brinsley's death, but the will of his widow, Margaret, has been preserved. Dated 1 April 1647, it shows that Brinsley must have died between 1630, when his last work appeared,<sup>72</sup> and the date of the will, when Margaret is referred to as his widow. She died in the parish of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, London, leaving only small sums of money, sheets, pillowcases, gowns, hats and silver spoons, one of these going to her stepson John as his only legacy. To her daughter Hannah she left the books which "my sonne James" should have had.<sup>73</sup>

Brinsley's success in pioneering a comprehensive language-teaching course was recognised in his lifetime, as Elton demonstrates in a reference to the public acknowledgement of his merits made by the rhetorician, grammarian and spelling reformer, the "learned" Mr. Butler of Oxford. He points out that, when the fourth edition of his *Rhetoric* was published, "in stead of the commendations of many other of principall note, which especially in *Oxford* are wont to be prefixed before any worke of speciall worth as that is; [he]

taketh only the testimonie of this Author, in a place or two in his Grammar-Schoole, and sets it before his booke, in stead of many".<sup>74</sup> This compliment was paid to Brinsley in 1618; it was reinforced by the action of five publishers in reissuing *Ludus* in 1627, and even more so, after his death, by the re-printing of *The Posing of the Parts*, issued in its fifteenth and last edition in 1687. The sincerest compliment was imitation; a certain Thomas Hall (not, apparently, related to Joseph) produced two more "grammatical translations" in open imitation of Brinsley's. Hall advertises the second as a supplement to Brinsley's translation of the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, arguing that such a text is required because not only was Brinsley unable to complete all his projected translations before his death, but that those which he had completed were now out of print. The first translation appeared in 1651 and the second in 1655.<sup>75</sup>

It has recently been claimed that "Leicestershire . . . merits particular mention as the home of the chief writer on educational matters in the early seventeenth century"—John Brinsley.<sup>76</sup> It is good to see this acknowledgement of his importance, since his reputation has, in general, been eclipsed by the greater fame of his immediate successor, Jan Amos Comenius. The Moravian educational reformer began to publish his textbooks on language-teaching at the end of Brinsley's life, the first of any importance appearing in 1631. They met with immediate acclaim because they were designed to relate to the increasing scientific preoccupations of the seventeenth century. It is hoped that this study will contribute in some measure to a more general acknowledgement of the importance and interest of Brinsley's life and work.

#### NOTES

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1. On Brinsley as a teacher, cf. Levi Fox, *A Country Grammar School. A History of Ashby-de-la-Zouch Grammar School* (Oxford, 1967), Chapter IV. On Brinsley as a linguist, with a short account of his life and a bibliography of his works, cf. Vivian Salmon, "John Brinsley: 17th Century Pioneer in Applied Linguistics", *Historiographica Linguistica*, II., ii (1975), pp. 175-89
2. John Throsby (ed.), *Thoroton's History of Nottinghamshire*, II (London, 1797), pp. 259-60. Cf. also G. F. Farnham, *Quorndon Records* (1912), on the Brinsley family, *passim*
3. J. J. Howard and J. L. Chester (ed.), *The Visitation of London . . . 1633, 1634 and 1635. Publications of the Harleian Society*, 15 (1880), 101. This was a family of merchants, one of whom, Thomas, matriculated at Christ's, Cambridge, in 1592
4. J. Peile (ed. J. A. Venn), *Biographical Register of Christ's College 1505-1905*, I. (Cambridge, 1910), 162. For the spelling "Bringley" to be acceptable as a possible variant of "Brinsley", the pronunciation must have been *Brindgely*
5. Wills (Folio 83), Leicester Record Office, dated 29 September 1573
6. J. Brinsley, *The Third Part of the True-Watch* (London, 1622), ff. a2r.-a4v
7. Peile, *op. cit.*, 162. (Mat. siz. *Bringley*, scholar *Brinsley*, B.A., Brynsley.)
8. H. G. Alexander, *Religion in England 1558-1662* (1968), 87. On the third Earl of Huntingdon, cf. M. Claire Cross, *The Puritan Earl* (1966). She notes (p. 136) that among the livings in his gift was that of Belton, where he also owned land. The vicar of Belton when Brinsley was a child was one John Bares, or Burrowes, described as "a teacher in his benefice" (*ibid.*), and he may have been the intermediary through whom Brinsley came to the notice of Huntingdon. For the Puritan situation in Leicestershire, cf. C. E. Welch, "Early Non-conformity in

- Leicestershire", *Trans. Leicestershire Archaeol. and Hist. Soc.*, XXXVII (1961-2), 29-43
9. On Anthony Gilby, see entry in D[ictionary] of N[atational] B[iography], and M. C. Cross, "The Third Earl of Huntingdon and Elizabethan Leicestershire", *T.L.A.H.S.*, XXXVI (1960), 10, who draws attention to the absence of evidence for his having held the living of Ashby
  10. Peile, *op. cit.*, 173
  11. For details of the clergy associated with Lincoln Cathedral in this period cf. C. W. Foster, "The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I", *Publications of the Lincoln Record Society*, 23 (1926); on Chaderton as prebendary cf. 433
  12. On Puritan attitudes to rhetoric cf. Vivian Salmon, *The Works of Francis Lodwick* (1972), 73
  13. On Robert Johnson and his family cf. *DNB* entry and C. R. Bingham, *Our Founder. Some Account of Archdeacon Johnson* (Uppingham, 1884)
  14. *The Posing of the Parts* (London, 1612), f.A2
  15. John and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, I., ii. (Cambridge, 1922), 475
  16. Presumably the fifth Earl of Huntingdon, who succeeded in 1604
  17. *Posing*, f.A2
  18. Noted by J. B. Mullinger, "English Grammar Schools", *Cambridge History of English Literature* VII (Cambridge, 1911), 340
  19. The date of the first edition is unknown. An abridgement (*Certain Grammar Questions*) appeared in 1605
  20. *A Consolation for our Grammar Schooles* (London, 1622), 45 [i.e., f.F3r]
  21. J. Kaye, *Anthony Hunton, M.D., an Elizabethan Physician* (Leeds, 1926)
  22. *The First Booke of Tullies Offices translated grammatically* (London, 1616). "Epistle dedicatorie", ff.A2v.-A3r
  23. Peile, *op. cit.*, 93-4
  24. Foster, *op. cit.*, 31
  25. Cf. W. G. Hoskins and R. A. McKinley, *A History of the County of Leicester*, III (1955), 243. At the bishop's visitation of 1614 it was reported that the curate acted as schoolmaster. On Kegworth school cf. also Joan Simon, "Town Estates and Schools in the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries", in Brian Simon (ed.), *Education in Leicestershire 1540-1940* (Leicester, 1968)
  26. *A Consolation*, 28
  27. *Ibid.*, 15
  28. On Hildersham, cf. *DNB* entry. On the appointment of lecturers cf. W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Leicestershire*, I. (1907), 373
  29. On Hildersham and the "millenary" petition cf. Alexander, *op. cit.*
  30. *The Third Part of the True-Watch*, f.a2r
  31. Venn, *op. cit.*, 101
  32. On Haine cf. Venn, *op. cit.*, 340. On Brinsley's visit to Merchant Taylors school cf. T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana, 1944) I., 582. Brinsley himself recalls (*Consolation*, 45) "hauing seene in a chiefe Schoole in London, good vse of verball translations"
  33. Fox, *op. cit.*, 25
  34. On Hall, cf. *DNB* entry and his autobiography, *The Shaking of the Olive Tree* (London, 1660)
  35. *Ludus Literarius, or, the Grammar Schoole* (London, 1612), f.§2v
  36. *Epistles, the First Volume, Containing two Decads* (London, 1608), Decad VI, 65-74
  37. *Cato translated grammatically* (London, 1612), ff.A3v.-A5r
  38. Joan Simon, *op. cit.*, 11
  39. Fox, *op. cit.*, 136
  40. *The True Watch* (London, 1606)
  41. *The Second Part of the True Watch* (London, 1607), f.A3
  42. *Sententiae Pueriles* (London, 1612), ff.A2r.-A3v
  43. *Virgils Eclogues* (London, 1620), f.A2v
  44. *Esops Fables* (London, 1624), "Epistle dedicatorie"
  45. *A Consolation*, 20
  46. Fox, *op. cit.*, 135
  47. Foster, *op. cit.*, cxxvii
  48. *Ibid.* lxx
  49. *Ibid.*, cxxx

50. William Lilly's account, related in C. Burman, *The Lives of those Eminent Antiquaries, Elias Ashmole, Esquire, and Mr. William Lilly* (London, 1774), 8
51. Samuel Clark, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in this Later Age*, I., Of Divines (London, 1683), 160. The reference is to the religious writer Edmund Stanton
52. Fox, *op. cit.*, 137-9
53. *Cato*, f.A4r
54. *Epistles*, Decad II., 137-44
55. *The Third Part of the True-Watch*, ff.b1v.-b.2r
56. *Consolation*, 23
57. Cf. *Cato*, f.A4v
58. On Harington, cf. *DNB* entry. Harington was related to Brinsley's patrons, his aunt Sarah being the mother of Henry, the fifth earl
59. *Consolation*, 43-4
60. Burman, *op. cit.*, 5-6
61. *Ludus*, 3, 10
62. Fox, *op. cit.*, 12
63. *Ibid.*, 141
64. Leicester Records Office. *Liber Officii in Curia Magistri Clarke* (1D41/13/44), September 1617
65. *Corderius Dialogues translated grammatically* (London, 1614), dedicated to Cavendish, on whom cf. *DNB* entry
66. The Ashby baptismal register contains an entry for Susanna Bringley, daughter of Matthew. The burial register of St. James, Clerkenwell, contains an entry for Elizabeth, wife of Matthew Brinsley (d. October 1618) and for Matthew himself (15.8.1625). It is not impossible that Matthew, like John, could have migrated to London
67. *The Third Part of the True-Watch*, f.a2r
68. Elton's will is P.C.C. 73 Byrde. On Sibbes cf. *DNB* entry
69. S. M. Kingsbury (ed.), *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, I. (Washington, 1906), 91-2. Cf. also T. C. Pollock (ed.), *A Consolation* (New York, 1943), iii
70. A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), 75
71. R. Brinsleius, *Disputatio medica inauguralis, de scorbuto* (Leyden, 1668)
72. *Stanbrigii embryon relimatum, seu vocabularium metricum* (London, 1630)
73. P.C.C. 72 Essex. "James" may refer to the child of that name who was born at Ashby on 8.9.1605 and buried on 7.1.1610; he appears to have been Brinsley's second son
74. *The Third Part of the True-Watch*, f.a3r
75. *Wisdoms Conquest* (London, 1651) and *Phaetons Folly* (London, 1655)
76. N. Pye (ed.), *Leicester and its Region* (Leicester, 1972), p. 496