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History.

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EUROPE  
DURING  
THE MIDDLE AGES.

VOL. IV.

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A

HISTORY OF EUROPE,

During the

MIDDLE AGES.

VOL. IV





**T A B L E,**  
**ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL,**  
**TO THE FOURTH VOLUME OF**  
**EUROPE DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.**

**SECTION II.**

GERMANIC EUROPE — *continued.*

**BOOK II.**

ENGLAND — *continued.*

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# EUROPE

DURING

## THE MIDDLE AGE

### SECTION II.

GERMANIC EUROPE — *continued.*

#### BOOK II.

ENGLAND.

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#### CHAP. III.

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

I. ARTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS. — II. LITERATURE, ETC. IN THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD. — FIRST, THEIR VERNACULAR LITERATURE, POETRY, HOMILIES, ETC. : SECONDLY, THEIR LATIN LITERATURE. — GILDAS. — NENNIUS. — ST. ALDHELM. — BEDE. — ALCUIN. — III. THEIR SCIENCE. — BEDE. — BRIDFERTH. — ALCUIN, ETC.

WHEN the Saxons arrived on the English coasts, they were among the most barbarous of the Germanic tribes. Unacquainted with the use of letters ; savage in their habits ; ignorant of the necessary arts of life ; and despising all except that of war : with no desires except such as, in their gratification, were injurious to public or individual prosperity ; acknowledging no law, except

individual will ; and contemning more polished because more feeble nations ; they were, in the truest sense of the word, barbarians. Nor was their contact with the Britons likely to benefit them. The Britons were almost as rude as themselves : the last lingering traces of Roman civilisation were almost faded away, through the interminable wars which signalised the long decline of the empire ; and, even if the natives had been qualified to instruct their victors, an hostile spirit would for ever have kept the two people separate. To Christianity the Saxons were indebted, not only for the ornamental, but for the useful arts of life ; not only for literature, but for science. Without the instructions of the missionaries, and that intercourse with the civilised continent which followed their conversion, they would have continued to live, like the wild beasts of the forests, the terror of their local habitations. Historians with more prejudice than information, or, perhaps, with a dishonesty superior to both, have not hesitated to condemn the labours and views of the Roman missionaries ; have deplored the subversion of the ancient British church ; and regarded the arrival of the strangers as in every respect portentous of evil to this island. The truth, however, is, that to the Roman missionaries our ancestors were indebted for every thing that improves life, for their hopes of immortality, for their greatness, probably for their existence as a nation. The effects of this moral revolution were, indeed, vast, but sufficiently explicable. Hitherto the only path to distinction lay in war : the use of arms, therefore, was the chief, almost the only branch of education ; and with such intensity had it been cultivated, that the “ strife of spears ” was loved even for its own sake, and the human feelings completely forgotten. Hence, the noblest faculties of our nature had lain dormant, until religion called them forth. She indicated to the eye of ambition other fields than that of blood, other enjoyments than that of tossing the helpless infant on the point of the lance. By her precepts, by the preaching

and example of the missionaries, by intercommunication with the civilised states of France and Italy, the character of the people was soon elevated; not only religion, but intellectual knowledge, began to be esteemed: in the cloister, all that could be learned at that period was prosecuted with eager study; and, in less than two centuries from the arrival of St. Augustine, England could boast of a higher degree of mental culture, — we use the comparison advisedly, — than any other European country. In some arts, indeed, she was below both Gaul and Italy; but in other objects of the intellect, especially in literature, she had the undoubted superiority; a fact which has been acknowledged by the best foreign critics. Let us not forget, however, that, during the Anglo-Saxon period, knowledge was only in its infancy; that, compared with its present advanced state, it was rude: but the efforts of a people emerging from barbarism is at all times an interesting subject of contemplation: we applaud at every step; we weigh the men and their circumstances; and, if perfection be not approached, the human mind is seen to vindicate its origin, its high destiny; to manifest its infinitely progressive powers. And we must bear in remembrance, that, even respecting a nation but newly entered on the boundless career of improvement, something useful may be discovered. In the first place, its infant conception will be impressed with the spirit of the times: we shall see, and know, and feel, what our forefathers saw, and knew, and felt; and shall thus revert to a scene of existence which, though widely different from the present, may not deserve contempt. In the second place, if there are many truths, the full developement of which depends on progressive improvements, on the acuteness of the human intellect, and the aggregated treasures of human experience, there are many others, which, being in their nature eternal and immutable, are not *substantially* affected by social accidents. We say *substantially*; for, in the manner of



conception and of communication, even truth may change. The material is the same, whatever shape may be given to it.

But general observations will convey no definite idea to the reader; and we shall proceed to glance at the state of Anglo-Saxon intellect under the three ordinary forms of its manifestation: — I. In the arts of life. II. In literature. III. In science.

I. ARTS OF LIFE. The first inventions of man will regard his actual wants; nor, until these are satisfied, will he have leisure or inclination for comforts, still less for elegancies. Of these, the first concern his *food*, and the skill necessary to procure it. On the cultivation of the ground, and the breeding of cattle, must every social edifice be reared. That agriculture and rural economy were much esteemed by the Saxons, is evident from the very names of their months.\*

*Wolf-monat*, or wolf-month; so called because in that month (January) the wolves were the most to be dreaded.

*Sprout-kele* (February), from the sprouting of the kele-wort, the ordinary pot-herb of the Saxons.

*Lenct-monat* (March) because the days were lengthening.

*Oster-monat* (April), whether from the *eastern* winds during that month, or from an ancient goddess, is perhaps doubtful.

*Tri-milki* (May), because the cows were now milked three times a day.

*Weyd-monat* (June), because in this month the cattle were sent to *wade* in the marshes.

*Hey-monat* (July), *hay* month.

*Barn-monat* (August), from the gathering of the harvest into the *barns*.

*Berst-monat* (September), *bere* or barley month.

*Wyn-monat* (October), *wine* month, when the grapes were pressed.

\* The names of their months, under the pagan system (as given by Bede, *De Ratione Temporum*, Opera, vol. ii.), are sometimes different. On their conversion, the pagan names were changed into the agricultural.

*Wint* or *winden monat* (November,) the *wind* month.

*Winter-monat* (December), *winter* month.

In their pagan state, however, the Saxons, like the other Germanic tribes, cared little for agriculture; so that its improvements must be referred to the influence of Christianity, which inspired them with a taste for peaceful occupations. From the twelve plates published by the industrious Strutt, we are enabled to form a satisfactory idea of their rustic occupations. In January, three men are busy with the plough: the one leads the oxen; the second holds that instrument; the third scatters the seed in the furrow just made. The plough is of a ponderous rude construction, requiring four oxen to draw. In February, men are pruning their trees. In March, they are digging in the garden, and sowing or planting vegetables. In April, we no longer see the husbandman; but we have the noble regaling his friends with banqueting and music, — an evident remnant of the old superstition which welcomed the near approach of the sun. May presents us with sheep-shearing; June, with corn-shearing; July, with the lopping of branches; August, with the cutting of barley; September, with hunting; October, with hawking; November, with husbandmen preparing their tools; December, with threshing and winnowing the corn. Most of these plates exhibit implements of the rudest character, and no great skill in their use; yet they cannot fail to interest. They exhibit a social condition very different from that drawn by Tacitus, when every thing rural was beheld with contempt by the freeborn warrior. The sword had, indeed, been exchanged for the ploughshare; the spear for the shepherd's crook. And let us not forget, that, if the utensils were rude, much was effected by them; that labour supplied the place of mechanical skill. In agriculture, as in every other useful thing, the ecclesiastics were the instructors of the people. It was in a poor condition when the monks applied themselves to it. The great estates were cultivated by theowas, or slaves, who could not be ex-

pected to take much interest in their task : they worked with reluctance, and they wistfully looked for the setting sun. The lands bestowed on the monks were wild and desert, often marshy, or covered with wood ; yet, as they lay beyond the bounds of social haunts, they were peculiarly suited to the contemplative life of their new owners. As manual labour was still exercised, in conformity with the rule of St. Benedict, by the religious, they vigorously commenced their herculean task, doubly inspired by the prospect of a comfortable support, and by the motives of charity. In a short time the forests were felled, marshes drained, waste lands reclaimed, bridges erected, roads constructed ; plentiful harvests started even from the fens of Lincolnshire, and waved even on the desert coast of Northumberland. Their example stimulated the industry of the lay proprietors ; and whatever improvements they introduced, were soon adopted throughout the island.\*

The produce of the earth and the flesh of their domestic animals, especially of their brethren the swine, appear to have continued the only diet of the Saxons, until the time of St. Wilfrid, who is said to have first taught the natives of Sussex the art of catching and cooking fish. Though this seems improbable, there can be no doubt that fish was not a general article of food before his time.† Afterwards it was plentiful enough. Of eels, especially, we read in abundance ; 4000 were annually presented by the monks of Ramsey to those of Peterborough ; and, in different charters of grants made to monastic bodies, we read of rivers and bays where quantities were caught, varying from 2000 to 60,000 annually. A dialogue, composed by Elfric, for the use of children learning the Latin tongue, acquaints us with some curious particulars : —

\* Bede, *De Ratione Temporum* (Opera, tom. ii. p. 81.) Tacitus, *De Moribus Germanorum*, p. 13. Strutt, *orda Angel Cynnman*, vol. i. p. 43. Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 144.

† Probably St. Wilfrid merely taught them to fish with the *net*.

- Q. "Fisherman, what gainest thou by thine art?"  
 A. "Big loaves, clothing, and money."  
 Q. "How dost thou catch the fish?"  
 A. "I ascend my vessel, and cast my net into the river. I also throw in a hook, a bait, and a rod."  
 Q. "Suppose the fishes are unclean?"  
 A. "I throw the unclean out, and take the clean for food."  
 Q. "Where dost thou sell the fish?"  
 A. "In the city."  
 Q. "Who buys them?"  
 A. "The citizens. I cannot take so many as I could sell."  
 Q. "What fishes dost thou catch?"  
 A. "Eels, haddocks, minnows, eel-pouts, skate, lampreys, and any thing else that swims in the river."  
 Q. "Why dost thou not fish in the sea?"  
 A. "Sometimes I do, but not often; because, there, a great ship is necessary."  
 Q. "What dost thou take in the sea?"  
 A. "Herrings, salmon, porpoises, sturgeons, oysters, crabs, muscles, winkles, cockles, flounders, plaice, lobsters, and such things."  
 Q. "Canst thou take a whale?"  
 A. "No: it is dangerous to catch whales. It is safer to go into the river with my vessel, than to go with many ships in quest of whales."  
 Q. "Why?"  
 A. "Because it is more pleasant to take fish which I can kill with one blow. Yet many catch whales without danger, and then they receive a great price; but I dare not, such is my natural timidity."

The cheapness of fish accounts for its general use: by the poor, flesh meat could not be used as a general article of food, and the same may be said of fine wheat; barley bread was their ordinary support. Similar was the case as to the beverage: water or milk for the poor; ale for the more easy in circumstances; mead and wine for the rich. That wine was made in this country is indisputable. The emperor Probus first allowed to the Britons the cultivation of the grape; and Bede speaks of it as a common art. From William of Malmesbury we learn that, even in his time, the wines of Gloucestershire were little inferior to those of France. The fact

is confirmed by the seventh plate in Strutt's collection, where grapes are gathered, put into a wine-press, and pressed out by two men. We may observe that the Saxons carried both eating and drinking to excess, — a defect derived from their Germanic source.\*

When the first wants of nature are supplied, man will pay some attention to comfort in his habitation. In the *domestic architecture* of the Saxons, we find little to praise. The houses even of nobles were of wood, as indeed were the temples and churches down to the latter half of the seventh century. Those of the rich appear to have been extensive enough; but they long were rude, low, and uncomfortable. All these have long been swept away; and it is only from incidental hints that we can conceive some idea of their structure. The walls were of wood, with bricks or stone at the corners; the roof consisted of branches of trees covered with thatch, an aperture being left in the centre for the transmission of smoke. Even the palace of the Northumbrian king appears to have consisted merely of a large hall, with two openings for doors: but this was in more ancient times. The churches, forts, &c. alone will enable us to form any idea of the state of the art prior to the conquest. That the only material known to the more ancient Saxons was wood, is evident from their word to build, *getymbrian*, "to make of wood," which continued to be their ordinary term when timber were replaced by stone walls. Thus the temple profaned by the high-priest Coifi † was of that material; so also were the churches successively built by St. Augustine at Canterbury, and by St. Paulinus at York. In the earlier ages of Christianity, church architecture was far from uniform: the Scottish missionaries built in one way, the Irish in another. Thus Bede calls the churches built of split oak the *Irish* method; the Scottish used

\* *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, De Pontificibus, lib. iv. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica Ang. lib. i. cap. i. Eddius, Vita S. Wilfridi (apud Bollandistas, Acta SS. die Aprilis xxiv.) Turner, Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. book 7. chap 3, 4.*

† See Vol. III. page 177.

oaken planks. The Roman missionaries introduced the use of stone; but though the example was soon diffused throughout the country, the stone continued for some time longer to be unhewn and uncemented; the workmanship to be ponderous, and rude. But, from the intercourse of the Saxon ecclesiastics with the Continent, from the admiration which they must have felt at beholding the still splendid remains of Rome, the art could not fail to improve. The men by whom this improvement was introduced into the southern provinces are not known; but the names of Saints Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop the gratitude of the north has consigned to posterity. The improvements which Benedict introduced into the architecture of the country, his introduction of cement and glass, we have already noticed.\* The first attempt of Wilfrid was to restore and embellish the church of York, which had been originally founded by St. Paulinus, and afterwards rebuilt of rough stone. He strengthened the walls, and washed them; making them, according to Eddius, whiter than snow: from the windows he removed the rude lattices of wood and linen curtains, which he replaced by glass; and over the roof he threw a covering of lead. At Ripon he erected a new church from the foundations, and on it he was enabled to display more taste and even splendour. It had not only hewn stone; its roof was supported by columns, and its entrances adorned by porticoes. •But the monastery of Hexham exhibited the highest improvement of the art. Its foundations were deep; its stones were finely polished; its walls and columns were lofty; and it had spiral winding stairs to the top of each tower. Such, in fact, was its splendour, that Eddius, who had been at Rome when he wrote St. Wilfrid's life, declared no building on this side the Alps was equal to it. From the foundation of the monastery of Croyland †, whose massy piles of wood were driven into the fenny ground, we may infer that the art had made some pro-

\* See Vol. III. page 94.

† Ibid. page 226.

gress. If, as we learn from Giraldus Cambrensis, the stones used in the foundation of Peterborough church (Midhamstead) were so large that eight oxen could scarcely move one of them, we may form some conception of the enormous strength of these places. The church of Ramsey, as described by the historian of that monastery, affords us no mean idea of Saxon enterprise; the abbey of St. Alban's, a foundation of the royal Offa, which struck the beholders with surprise, we may well believe to have been extensive, and even majestic; and Westminster Abbey, which owed its existence to the Confessor was not, as far as we can judge of it by Camden's description (taken from an ancient MS.), likely to injure the reputation of the country. But, if many of these edifices were vast and massive, they were doubtless destitute of symmetry and taste: our architectural glory must be referred to the thirteenth century.\*

The *furniture* of the Anglo-Saxon houses was clumsy and rude. Even the rich appear to have wanted many of the conveniences which are now possessed by our inferior tradesmen. Yet there was often a grotesque mixture of meanness and magnificence. While the walls were of wood, without tapestry or covering; and while mean wooden benches were placed along them, there might be seen curtains of the most costly description, frequently embroidered with gold, and domestic vessels of gold and silver; sometimes the very tables were of the latter metal. The interior of the churches was much more magnificent. The walls were often covered with foreign paintings, or with rich tapestry; the vessels displayed on solemn occasions were of the precious metals; the altar sparkled with gold and jewels; and the dress of the priests was beyond measure superb. That the sacerdotal garments were most splendid, may be well conceived from the remains of those found a few

\* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. iv. cap. 10.; necnon *Vita S. Cuthberti*, p. 263. Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, cap. 16, 17, 23. Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Pontificibus*, lib. iii. Ingulphus Croylandensis, *Historia*, p. 4. *Historia Ramseyensis*, p. 399. Strutt, *orda Angel Cynnan*, i. 33, &c. Lingard, *Antiquities*, Appendix F.

years ago in the coffin of St. Cuthbert \* ; but we are startled when we read of the immense riches in the churches. In that of York were two altars entirely covered with gold and silver : one of them, in addition, ornamented by a profusion of gems, supported a lofty crucifix of amazing value ; while above blazed three ranges of lamps, all silver. The very books partook of this unsparing magnificence. By orders of St. Wilfrid, the four gospels were written on a purple ground, in letters of gold ; and, when finished, they were enclosed in a casket of the same metal, and presented to the monastic church of Ripon. Still more profuse than the patrons of the church at York was St. Ina, founder of the famous chapel at Glastonbury.

“ This king Ina,” says William of Malmesbury, “ built also a chapel of gold and silver, with ornaments and vases of the same metals. The construction of the chapel required 2600 pounds of silver ; that of the altar, 264 pounds of gold. The cup with the paten weighed 10 pounds, the cover above 8, both solid gold. The candlesticks were of silver, weighing 12½ pounds ; the covers of the gospels were of gold, above 20 pounds in weight ; the altar vessels about 17 pounds ; the golden ewer 8 ; the silver vessel for holy water, 20 ; the images of Christ, his blessed mother, and of the twelve apostles, contained 175 in silver and 38 of gold. The pall for the altar and the priestly vestments were interwoven with gold, and cunningly ornamented with precious stones.”

The embroidered vestments were the work of the nuns ; but how so much gold and silver could be collected, is inexplicable. The presents made to the pope and the people of Rome were, as we have before seen †, considerable ; but they dwindle into insignificance when compared with those of the royal saint. ‡

The consideration of such workmanship necessarily leads us to that of *mechanics* and *artisans*. The pro-

\* See Raine's St. Cuthbert.

† Vol. III p. 322.

‡ Bede, *Historia Abbatum Wiremuthensium*, p. 295, &c. Alcuinus, *De Pontificibus Ecclesie Eboracensis*, verses 1224, 1266, 1488. Surely this author has used a poet's licence. Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, cap. 17. Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesie*, p. 310. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, tom. i. p. 40, 104, 165, 222.



gress of these branches of industry must have been very slow ; for anciently all mechanics were slaves, and slaves do not soon learn the ornamental arts of life. Probably, however, either the earlier manufacture was of foreign origin, or foreign artisans were encouraged to settle in our boroughs. From the earliest period the smith must have been necessary : we read of goldsmiths, silversmiths, coppersmiths ; all of whom, in virtue of their callings, were held in high esteem, after their emancipation from the iron tyranny of their feudal lords, and their establishment in the royal boroughs, where they were immediately dependent on the monarch only. To mechanical pursuits ecclesiastics were much addicted. St. Dunstan worked in all the metals ; he made organs and bells : and his friend St. Ethelwolf successfully imitated his example. Other monks, some abbots, and even bishops, were no less eager to show their skill. The exercise of manual industry was in fact an agreeable relief to the monotony of a monastic life. Nor were the secular ecclesiastics ignorant of the same arts. In fact, a law of Edgar commands every priest “ to learn some handicraft, that knowledge may be increased.” From the few remains, however, which time has spared, none of our ancestors appear to have been much distinguished for skill or taste ; their workmanship was ill-fashioned and rude ; even their coins are of the same unfinished character. Whether glass-making was brought to greater perfection, can never be ascertained ; the arts of weaving and embroidery certainly were. In embroidery the Anglo-Saxon ladies are acknowledged to have been unrivalled. Nothing, indeed, can exceed their curious devices with the needle, which was made far to surpass the shuttle. Even in these, however, there is much want of taste. Barbarous nations are fond of whatever is gaudy ; and none more so than the Saxons. But if a correct judgment would condemn their most ingenious manufactures, let us not mistake the infancy for the manhood of an art. Our ancestors were in many respects much more disadvantageously situated than the

inhabitants of Gaul or Italy. They had every thing to learn; their fathers were as ignorant as themselves; nor were they surrounded by the remains of past greatness. The Greek or the Roman, however he might have degenerated from the ancient glory of his country, could not fail to preserve the knowledge of some arts: with such models before him, splendid even in their decay, they could never entirely forget the principles of statuary, painting, or architecture; but the wild Saxon, who had seen nothing but his own hut embosomed in the valley or the forest, had no such reminiscences to inspire him.\*

II. LITERATURE.† The literature of the Anglo-Saxons may be divided into the vernacular and the Latin; the domestic, and that of foreign growth. Each has a distinct character, and each shall be considered separately.

1. When the natural wants of a people are satisfied; when the means of subsistence, and the arts which afford comfort to life, are known and diffused, the mind will vindicate its celestial origin by exploring new and nobler paths of knowledge. It too has its wants, which, though posterior to the physical, exhibit themselves in every nation emerging from barbarism. It would be difficult to mention a people, even in the earlier stages of civilisation, wholly destitute of intellectual resource. Even where the use of letters was unknown, traditional songs and legendary tales were eagerly received; they withdrew the mind from present scenes to others new, and therefore interesting: its present sphere of enjoyment is too limited to satisfy its cravings, and it rushes into the world of imagination. The infancy of every nation is distinguished by a love of the marvellous, which, indeed, retains its empire until reason, the offspring of

\* Chiefly the same authorities, with the addition of Turner, Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. p. 103, &c., and of Lingard, Antiquities, p. 142. See also the two lives of St. Dunstan by the contemporary priest and Osbern.

† Including Theology, which was not yet a *science*, but merely a branch of general literature. It became a science in after-ages, through the subtleties of the schoolmen.

wider experience, teaches us that such things cannot be; and when once the bounds of possibility are passed, cold will be our interest in any prospect, however glittering. Such songs, such traditional tales, the Saxons doubtless had before their conversion to Christianity; incidentally, we have positive evidence of the fact: but not a trace remains of them; for, as they were of a pagan character, the zeal of the missionaries would endeavour to eradicate them from the memory of the people. But the same principle of curiosity is irresistibly active; and if the path to its gratification was closed to it in one direction, it was, of necessity, opened in another. Songs of a character more kindred with the new hopes and feelings engendered by Christianity, began to be cultivated. Unfortunately, however, scarcely a vestige of them remains: some, indeed, there are, of a subsequent age; and from them, as well as from the hints derived from more ancient sources, we will endeavour to glance at the progress of the vernacular literature, consisting of poetry in its origin, and of poetry and homilies combined, when religion was more universally diffused among the people.

The most ancient Saxon poet whose name time has spared, is also the author of the most ancient piece of poetry now extant. This was the *Elder Caedmon*, so called to distinguish him from a later poet of that name. Him we shall introduce to the reader in the words of the venerable Bede.

“ In the monastery of the same abbess\* there was a certain monk, remarkable for the divine grace which enabled him to compose songs, to the encouragement of religion and devotion; so that whatever he learned, through the translation of others, from the Holy Scriptures, *that* he could turn into poetic words and metre of exceeding sweetness, in his native language, the English. By his songs the minds of many have learned to despise the world, and to glow with the love of heavenly things. Others, indeed, after him, in our religious nation, attempted to make verses, but none were able to contend with him; for he learned his art, not from men, nor by men, but

\* Whitby, the Monastery of St. Hilda.

received it as a gift from above. Wherefore he was unable to compose any thing of a frivolous or vain character, but such verses only as relate to religion, and become a religious tongue. While in his secular habit, until a mature age, he learned nothing of the art. Indeed, he had no taste for it: for sometimes, at a festive entertainment, when, for the sake of hilarity, the harp was brought, and all required to sing in their turns, he arose, left the tabl and returned home. On one occasion, when he acted in this manner, when he had left the hall of feasting and hastened to the stable to look after the cattle, which were this night confided to him, and when at the proper time he laid his limbs to rest, behold one appeared to him in his dream, saluted him, and, calling him by name, said, 'Caedmon, give me a song!' He replied, 'I cannot sing, and for that reason I have retired hither.' The man rejoined, 'But thou must sing me something!' 'What subject must I choose?' 'Choose that of the creation!' Having received this command, he began immediately to sing verses in praise of God the Creator, which he had never heard before, and of which this is the sense:— 'Now let us praise the Author of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator, the counsel of the Father of glory! For, as he is the eternal God, he is the Author of all marvellous things: he, the Guardian of the human race, first created the sky for the canopy, the earth for the habitation of the sons of men!' This, I say, is the meaning, not the order, of the words which he sang in his dream; nor is it possible to translate songs, however excellent, from one language to another, without injuring their elegance or their majesty. Arising from sleep, he retained in his memory all that he had sung while in his dream; and he soon added, in the same measure, many other verses worthy of God. The next morning, proceeding to the sheriff under whose jurisdiction he lived, he related the gift which he had received; and being brought to the abbess, he was commanded, in the presence of many learned auditors, to report his dream and his song, that all might judge what was the nature and what the origin of his gift: and all agreed that it was a gift from Heaven. And they translated for him a certain portion of Scripture, either history or doctrine, telling him to versify it if he could. Accepting the challenge, he departed; and the next morning returned, to repeat the excellent song which he had been commanded to compose. Whence the abbess, admiring the grace of God within him, persuaded him to exchange the secular for the monastic habit, received him into the brotherhood, and ordered that he should be instructed in holy scripture. And whatever he had been able to learn by hearing,

he, pondering, and, like some animals, ruminating on it, turned it into a most harmonious poem, and, sweetly singing it, he made his teachers his hearers. He sang on the creation of the world; on the departure of Israel from Egypt, and the entry into the promised land, and on many other histories in sacred scripture. He sang, too, the incarnation, the passion, the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the preaching of the apostles; and many were his songs on the terrible judgment to come, on the horrible pains of hell, on the pleasures of the celestial kingdom. To these he added many other strains on the divine mercy and judgment, in all of which he endeavoured to withdraw men from the power of evil — to allure them to the love and practice of good deeds. For he was a man truly religious, humbly observing the regular discipline, and filled with a holy zeal against those whom he saw remiss. Wherefore a suitable end crowned his life.”\*

It would not, perhaps, be difficult to account for the sudden inspiration of Caedmon on other grounds than those of celestial revelation †; but our present business is rather with the subject than the man. Of the piece to which the Venerable alludes, a fragment has descended to us. For this we are indebted to his royal translator, Alfred, who, in the Saxon version of the Ecclesiastical History, professes to give us the very words of the poet. It is in eighteen lines, which we give line by line, without the Saxon, — a language easy of acquirement, yet far from an ordinary accomplishment: —

“ Now we should praise  
 The Guardian of the heavenly kingdom,  
 The Mighty Creator,  
 And the thoughts of his mind,  
 Glorious Father of his works!  
 As he, of every glory  
 Eternal Lord,  
 Established the beginning,  
 So he first shaped  
 The earth for the children of men,  
 And the heavens for its canopy.

\* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. iv. cap. 24.

† Such legends are not uncommon in the cloister. In Spain, according to the grave Ambrosio de Morales, an ignorant monk, was once in a similar manner taught to read and to write too.

Holy Creator !  
 The middle region,  
 The Guardian of mankind,  
 The Eternal Lord,  
 Afterwards made  
 The ground for men,  
 Almighty Ruler !

Two circumstances will particularly strike the reader in this most literal version — the *inversion* and the *paraphrasis*, the two fundamental characters of all Anglo-Saxon poetry : the one is so great, as often to hide the sense ; the other so extended, as almost to make us lose sight of the original idea. Deduct the phrases to express the Deity, which occupy eight lines ; the three used for the creation ; three more to design the earth ; and we have fourteen lines of periphrasis. The whole eighteen do not convey an idea beyond the simple narration of the first verse of Scripture, — *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.\**

But we must not thus briefly dismiss Caedmon. By Junius a poem was published, which he ascribed to that ancient monk ; but its paternity has been doubted by Hickes : whether there be any ground for the scepticism is not very clear. It is a paraphrase on various narratives of the Old Testament, especially on the creation ; and this is the first presumptive evidence that Caedmon is the author. A second consists in the similarity, not only of construction, but of style and sentiment. We give a few verses from Mr. Turner's translation : —

There was not yet then here,  
 except gloom like a cavern,  
 any thing made.  
 But the wide ground  
 stood deep and dim  
 for a new lordship,  
 shapeless and unsuitable.

\* Alfredus, *Historia Ecclesiastica Saxonica* Reddita, p. 597. Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 265.

On this with his eyes he glanced,  
 the king stern in mind,  
 and the joyless place beheld.  
 He saw the dark clouds  
 perpetually pass  
 black under the sky,  
 void and waste ;  
 till that this world's creation  
 thro' the word was done  
 of the King of Glory.

Here first made  
 the Eternal Lord,  
 the Patron of all creatures,  
 heaven and earth.  
 He reared the sky,  
 and this roomy land established  
 with strong powers,  
 Almighty Ruler !

The earth was then yet  
 with grass not green ;  
 with the ocean covered,  
 perpetually black ;  
 far and wider  
 the desert ways.

There was the glory-bright  
 Spirit of the Heaven's Wonder  
 borne over the watery abyss  
 with great abundance.  
 The Creator of angels commanded,  
 the Lord of life !  
 light to come forth

• over the roomy ground.

Quickly was fulfilled  
 the high King's command :  
 the sacred light came  
 over the waste  
 as the Artist ordered.

Then separated  
 the Governor of victory  
 over the water-flood  
 light from darkness,  
 shade from shine :  
 he made them both be named,  
 Lord of life !

Light was first,  
 thro' the Lord's word,

called day :  
 creation of bright splendour  
 pleased well the Lord,  
 At the beginning,  
 the birth of time,  
 the first day,  
 He saw the dark shade  
 black spread itself  
 over the wide ground,  
 when time declined  
 over the oblation-smoke of the earth.  
 The Creator after separated  
 from the pure shine,  
 our Maker,  
 the first evening.  
 To him ran at last  
 a throng of dark clouds.  
 To these the King himself  
 gave the name of night :  
 our Saviour  
 these separated.  
 Afterwards, as an inheritance,  
 the will of the Lord  
 made and did it  
 eternal over the earth.

Nothing can equal the poverty of this description,— if that may be called description which consists only of vain repetition or paraphrastic amplifications of scripture language. Such repetitions, such paraphrastic amplifications, must have been peculiarly acceptable to one who was not animated by a single spark of invention. The subject was enough to call forth a flame, wherever genius glowed ; but Caedmon had none ; and, as we transcribe, the question continually recurs, what made this man the admiration of St. Hilda's community? Undoubtedly the charm must have consisted in his vocal powers. Rude as was the age, we were prepared to expect something better than this. If the learned reader will compare the paraphrase of Caedmon with the poems of St. Avitus of Vienne, who lived a century and a half before the Saxon, he will be surprised at the contrast: the one is all nakedness, rude,



sterile, unimpressive; the other often catches a gleam of the fire which glowed in the breast of Virgil. The two, indeed, were placed in very different situations: the Gallic prelate beheld the still-existing, however rapidly fading, traces of Roman genius and taste: though the spirit was dying, it had not yet departed. On the other hand, Caedmon was illiterate: he was wholly unacquainted with the ancient stores of literature; nor, as his native mountains had never been irradiated with the Roman genius, could he discover a glimpse of the departing light. But, after all due allowances are made for the disparity of circumstances, we must still wonder at the contrast to which we have alluded.\*

After this specimen of sacred poetry, we have no wish to notice the poem of Judith,—a paraphrase of that heroine's history in one of the Apocryphal books,—or the other rude effusions of the sacred muse.

In this state the Anglo-Saxon poetry continued for two centuries. Both before and after Alfred, it was cultivated by all who had the taste for it, and it was always heard with applause. It formed the chief recreation, not only at festive entertainments, but in the open air; so that our street singers may boast of a profession somewhat older than is generally supposed. That St. Aldhelm, whose Latin poetry we shall hereafter mention, and who died early in the eighth century, composed ballads in the popular tongue, is expressly affirmed by Alfred and William of Malmesbury. By that monarch, who represents him as unrivalled, one ballad is mentioned so much a favourite with the public, that it was sung in the streets two centuries after the author's death. William adds a characteristic feature of the times. Aldhelm, anxious to instruct his half-barbarous countrymen, and still more to reclaim them from their vices, took his station as a public singer on

\* Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, iii. 318. See the Poems of St. Avitus in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tom. vi. pars 1. See also Vol. II, p. 220. of the present work.

the public bridges and thoroughfares. When he saw that his auditors were attentive, he ingeniously turned the subject from profane to sacred things, and by so doing effected much good.— It was a book of Saxon poems which first induced Alfred to learn the then difficult, and, out of the cloister, uncommon art of reading. From songs William of Malmesbury sometimes owns that he had derived his information; and Dunstan was charged with knowing the vain songs of his nation. In this latter case, indeed, the allusion is evidently to metrical incantations, which had, doubtless, subsisted from the pagan times. Canute the Great, as he was one day sailing by the abbey of Ely, heard the distant chanting of the monks, and this petty incident struck a chord which vibrated within him. He instantly composed a Saxon song, the beginning of which has been preserved by the chroniclers of Ely:—

“ Merrily sang the monks in Ely  
 When Canute the king was sailing by.  
 Row, my knights, near to the land,  
 And let us hear the brethren sing.”

Finally, Ingulf, as well as Malmesbury, bears evidence to the existence of popular songs, which, indeed, appear to have been handed down from father to son with peculiar enthusiasm. Frequent fragments may be found in the Saxon chronicle, not marked as verse, but incorporated with the prose, so as not easily to be distinguished from it. Thus, under the year 938, we have an account of king Athelstan's victory, which, though at first view mere prose, on a closer inspection betrays its rhythm, and a language consecrated to the service of the muse.\*

\* Of this celebrated king we had, with much trouble, prepared a new translation, differing evidently from Gibson's, Turner's, and Ingram's; when the one by Mr. Price, the accomplished editor of Warton's *History of English Poetry*, fell into our hands. In a moment we committed our own version to the flames, both because it had been made from faulty originals (Gibson and Ingram), and because Mr. Price is the first Saxon scholar who has understood the original. In justice to him we adopt both his version and his notes, which display a critical ingenuity likely to interest every student in the language. See the Appendix.

Under the year 975 we have another poem on the death of king Edgar. We will not translate it. Like the preceding, it exhibits the muse in the homeliest garb ; nor does it contain sufficient of nature or feeling to redeem its rugged barbarity.\*

But the best effusions of the Anglo-Saxon muse are not to be sought either in sacred literature or in the chronicles. Many compositions of an historical, romantic, and miscellaneous character remain, far superior in merit to the preceding ; and their entire publication would be a great boon to literature, since they would not only enable us to trace the history of our national poetry, but would throw great light on that of manners. From such fragments or collections as have already been published, we make two or three extracts, which will fully justify the assertion, that England had vernacular poets long before any other European country, and better than any other country down to the twelfth century. The period when most of the Anglo-Saxon poems were written cannot be ascertained. So little has our ancient language been studied, that we have no critics capable of distinguishing the style of the seventh from that of the eleventh century. Unless, therefore, some internal allusion to historic personages or manners guide us, we must remain in a chronological darkness that may be truly called Egyptian. Unfortunately, in the Saxon poems there are seldom such allusions ; so that we cannot possibly ascertain the age of more than about four of them. One or two of them are supposed to have been written by Danish, not by Anglo-Saxon poets ; but this is mere hypothesis : so nearly related were the two languages, that Dane or Angle could without difficulty write in either dialect. The first specimen is evidently from an Anglo-Saxon poet—of one hostile to the barbarous Danes, whom he calls heathens and pirates. It is the death of Brithnoth ; a composition

\* *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, Vita S. Aldelmi, p. 339. ; necnon De Regibus, pp. 45. 48. 101. Asserius Menevensis Vita Elfredi. Historia Eliensis, p. 505. Ingulphus Croylandensis, Historia, pp. 67, 68. Chronicon Saxonicum, an. 938. 975. Turner, Anglo-Saxons, iii 280, &c.*

that must doubtless be referred to the eleventh century. From the Saxon chronicle we learn that Brithnoth, a celebrated Northumbrian earl, a patriot of unrivalled bravery, fell in 991, in battle against the Danes, at Meldune. The place is not, as all our critics have supposed, Maldon in Essex, but Meldun in Northumberland. The following is a fragment : it belongs to a poem which has neither beginning nor end ; but, as a picture of the times, — and it appears to have been written soon after the reign of Ethelred II., — independent of its poetical character, it cannot fail to be read with interest : —

*Death of Brithnoth.\**

“ When Brithnoth began to train his bands, he instructed the warriors in their array and discipline, how they should stand, how guide their steeds : he bade that they should hold their shields right forward with firm grasp, and should not fear aught. Soon as he had arrayed his eager troops, he alighted amid his favourite band, the retainers of his household, whom he knew the most faithful of all. Meanwhile the herald of the vikings stood in his station : stoutly he called forth, and, advancing opposite, spake in these words to proclaim the threatenings of the private host, their embassy to the earl : — ‘ The seamen bold send me to thee ; they bid me say thou must deliver to them forthwith thy treasures for thy safety : better is it for you that ye should buy off this warfare with tribute, than that we should wage so hard a conflict : it boots not that we should slay each other. If ye will consent to this, we will ratify a peace with gold.’ ”

Brithnoth, however, scorned to buy the friendship of the pirates. Upraising his buckler with the left hand, and shaking his lance in his right, “ Hear, thou son of the deep, what this people say : for tribute ye shall have our weapons. Herald of the ocean men ! deliver to thy people a message in return, a declaration of defiance ! ” The earl concluded by insultingly advising the Danes

\* Though the translation of Brithnoth has been published by Mr. Conybeare in the *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, that book is become too scarce to be purchased at any price. We condense that translation, and, in some slight respects, alter it.

not to skulk to their ships, but to meet their enemy manfully. At this moment the two armies seem to have been separated by an estuary on the Northumbrian coast; and the tide was so high, that they could not immediately reach each other. Their impatience during this period is graphically described: if they could not cast the javelin across the stream, an arrow could be made to fly, and sometimes to do execution. At length the tide ebbed, so as to permit them to throw a hasty bridge—probably of long planks—over the now diminished bed of the estuary.\* For a few moments the passage was defended against the pirates; but the earl, in the consciousness of his bravery, and the magnanimity of his character, soon suffered them to advance without hinderance. His son, Wulfstan, who inherited his fearless intrepidity no less than his generosity, cried out from the brink of the estuary, “Warriors, come on! here is an open field for you. Advance quickly with all your might! God only can know which of us is to remain master of the field of slaughter!” The Danes needed little provocation to the combat:—

“Then the wolves of slaughter advanced across the waters; unimpeded the host of the vikings, passed over the river and its clear stream: the men of the sea carried their shields to the land, and bore their linden buklers. There against these fierce ones Brithnoth and his warriors stood prepared: he bade his men raise with their shields the fence of war, and to maintain themselves firmly against their enemies. The conflict, the glory of the chiefs †, drew nigh: the hour was come when the doomed warriors must fall. The shout arose; the ravens flocked together, and the eagle, greedy for his prey: a cry was on the earth. They darted from their hands many a stout spear; the sharpened arrow flew; the bows were continually bent; the buckler received the weapon’s point: keen was the fight; on both sides fell the brave; the youths lay slain. Wulfmaer was wounded; he sought rest from the battle; yea the kinsman of

\* *Briège healdan*, literally to *defend* the bridge. But if there were a bridge there already, why wait for the receding of the tide? It doubtless means, as Mr. Conybeare suspects, to *establish* a bridge—to throw some beams or planks across the stream.

† *Da waes foht neh, tir aet getohte*. May not the last member of the sentence also signify, the line of chiefs?

Brithnoth, his sister's son, was much mangled with the axe; but for this meet reward was returned to the vikings."

Anxious to revenge his nephew, Brithnoth encouraged his men to a terrific charge on the pirates; but he himself was met by the Danish leader, who wounded him with a dart: he returned the wound, however, and, with a second thrust, pierced the pirate's heart. "Then was the earl blithe; the stern warrior laughed, and uttered thanks to his Creator for the work of that day, which the Lord had given him."\* The joy of Brithnoth, however, was not to be long: he was pierced by a dart. But even in death he was not to be insulted; for when a pirate approached to plunder him of his jewels, he struck the fellow with his battle-axe such a blow, that he was glad to escape a second; and even when his stiffening hand had no longer strength to grasp his weapon, he bade his men march forward with dauntless hearts.† When he could no longer support himself standing or sitting, —

"He looked towards heaven: 'I thank thee, Lord of nations for all the prosperity which I have enjoyed on earth. Now, most mild Creator! much need have I that thou shouldst grant me thine aid, that my soul may take its departure in peace, and proceed to Thee, to thy keeping, Lord of Angels! Let not, I beseech Thee, the destruction of hell overwhelm it!'"

Seeing the fall of their chief, some of the Saxon thanes, even those who held land of him by military service, fled, leaving his corpse to be mangled by the victors. His domestics, however, were eager to avenge his fall. The exhortation of one of them, Alfwine, is characteristic of the people: —

"Let us now remember the times when we were wont to converse over our mead cups, when our warriors assembled in the hall, raised the boast around the benches. Now, in the fierce strife, let it be seen who is truly brave. Before you all will I

\* A similar passage occurs in the Chronicle of the Cid: — "Send me another of your sons; for I have killed two already, thanks be to God!"

† "On, Stanley, on!" The poet, like his great Saxon predecessor, was true to human nature.

prove that I am descended from noble blood, from a high Mercian race — for Ealhelm was the ancestor of my sires, a skilful chief and prosperous in the world. Never shall the thanes of this people have cause to reproach me that I sought a shelter from the conflict, when my chief lies mangled on the ground — he, — heaviest of afflictions! — at once my kinsman and my lord!”

The exhortation of Alfwine infused new courage into the more devoted of the deceased Brithnoth's vassals. Offa, shaking his ashen shaft, said, —

“ How well, Alfwine, hast thou encouraged our warriors, now that our chief lieth a corse, — our noble earl, on the cold ground. Needful is it that all of us should animate each other to continue the strife, so long as we can grasp battle-axe, dart, or sword.”

Another hero, Leofsuna, raising high his linden buckler, thus replied: —

“ Pledge give I thee, that I will not flee one step, but that I will advance to avenge my beloved chief. Never shall the steadfast warriors have need to reproach me for want of steadiness; that when my lord is low, I flee chieftainless from the fight; but I will rush on the opposing weapons — the axe and the spear.”

Leofsuna nobly fulfilled his pledge by immediately advancing against the victors. A fourth hero, Dumnere, “ no sluggish earl was he,” brandished his weapons, and shouted aloud, “ Let not him care for life who hath to avenge a lord!” The battle was renewed with tenfold vigour; cloven were bucklers, loudly clanged weapons, “ and the hauberk sang a strain of terror.” Offa fell, but not until he had sent before him many men of the sea. “ Stern was the meeting; firmly stood the warriors, or fighting they sunk, exhausted with wounds. Brithwold spoke (he was an aged man): he raised his shield, brandished his ashen spear, and said, —

“ Our spirit shall be the hardier, our courage the keener, our heart the greater, the more our comrades fall. Here lieth our chief, all mangled — the brave one in the dust; for ever

may he rue his shame who thinketh to fly from the strife of weapons. Old am I in years, yet will I not stir hence; but I expect to lie by the side of my lord — by that much-loved man.”

Godric, the son of Ethelgar, cheered them all to the conflict. “Oft he poured forth his darts, and sped the death-spear against the pirates. He hewed and slaughtered them till they fell in the fight.”

Here the fragment abruptly terminates. That *Brithnoth* was a character truly historic, rests not only on the Saxon chronicle, but on the *Historia Elyensis*, which is lavish in his praise, and minute in describing the battle of Meldune. The fragment is as valuable as it is genuine. It has more strength than almost any other poetical relic of the Saxon times; and it is remarkably free from that wearisome and unmeaning periphrasis which disfigures the metrical compositions of our ancestors. As a picture of manners, it is still more valuable. It proves — what some superficial enquirers into our early history have been so bold as to deny — that the feudal system had made considerable progress in this island long before the Norman conquest. How, indeed, it could escape the relations and obligations of that system, when other European nations were subject to them, — for Spain, though the fact has been denied, was in this respect situated just like the Saxon kingdom, — nobody has thought proper to explain. The Normans might confirm, or even extend, but they could not introduce, a policy which was inherent in all the nations of Germanic origin.\*

Another fragment, the battle of Finsborough, we shall lay before the reader. This is not historic; it is evidently legendary, founded on some tradition which, though originally derived, perhaps, from a real transaction, had been greatly distorted by successive scalds. It affords internal proof of a high antiquity, and of manners wholly pagan: —

\* Conybeare's *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, Introduction, p. xc.



*The Battle of Finisborough.*

- “ The sun had climb’d the eastern sky, —  
 But not by day the youthful band  
 May hear their leader’s battle cry,  
 Nor yet in Finsburg’s fatal strand  
 The warrior’s winged serpent fly ;  
 Pauses from blood the foeman’s hand,  
 Nor strives he yet to fire you hall’s proud canopy.
- “ Sweetly sang the birds of night,  
 The wakeful cricket chirrup’d loud,  
 And now the moon, serenely bright,  
 Was seen beneath the wandering cloud ;  
 Then roused him swift the deadly foe  
 To deeds of slaughter and of woe :  
 Now beneath the javelin’s stroke  
 The buckler’s massy circle rang.  
 Anon the chains of slumber broke  
 That chieftain great and good,  
 He, whose high praise fills every tongue,  
 First in valour as in blood,  
 The matchless Hengist to the battle woke.
- “ Up rose in that eventful tide  
 Full many a warrior brave ;  
 And don’d his armour’s golden pride,  
 And girt his glittering glaive.  
 At the high hall’s portal wide,  
 Foremost of the noble band,  
 Sigvar and Æba proudly stand :  
 Where other pass the foe might find  
 Ordlof watch’d with Guthlaf join’d ;  
 Garulf, next with fiery speed,  
 Roused Guthere from the slumberer’s bed.  
 No care of dress their steps delay’d,  
 Each grasp’d in haste his shining blade,  
 And fierce the brother warriors flew  
 To guard the hall’s high avenue.  
 He that prides him in the fight  
 Had joy’d to see that gallant sight.
- “ And now in accents loud  
 The foeman’s chieftain bold and proud  
 Sought what thane or battle lord  
 At the high gate kept watch and ward ;

‘ Sigvart is here, ’ the champion cried,  
 ‘ Sigvart oft in battle tried ;  
 Known to all the warrior train,  
 Where spreads the Frizian’s wide domain.  
 Now, chieftain, turn thee to the fight,  
 Or yield thee to the Jutish might.’

“ Soon the tented halls among  
 Loud the din of slaughter rung :  
 Closer now each hostile band  
 Grasps the shield with eager hand,  
 And many a chief is doom’d to feel  
 Through helm and head the griding steel :  
 First in that disastrous plain  
 Guthlaf’s valiant son was slain :  
 Where Garulf lies untimely dead  
 Many a fated hero bled.  
 There to seek his destined food,  
 The dark and willow-pinion’d raven stood ;  
 And far around that field of blood  
 The sword’s dread radiance beam’d to heaven :  
 It seem’d as though that morn had given  
 All Finsburg to the ravening flame.  
 Ne’er heard I yet of fight might claim  
 A nobler or a sadder name,

“ At the high hall a chosen band,  
 Leaders brave that shine afar,  
 Full sixty sons of victory stand  
 In all the golden pomp of war :  
 Little think they to forego  
 The hall of mead for that proud foe. \*  
 Five livelong days the battle sound \*  
 Was heard by Finsburg’s earth-raised mound ;  
 Yet undiminish’d and unquell’d  
 That hero band the portal held ;  
 Till, bleeding from the scylding’s blade,  
 The city’s lord his fear betray’d,  
 And told, in accents of despair,  
 How broken helm and corslet reft  
 Defenceless to the stroke had left  
 His head and bosom bare.  
 Then sought the vanquish’d train relief,  
 And safety for their wounded chief.\*

\* Conybeare’s Illustrations, p. 179. We must here observe, that the above version is very far from literal: it is rather a paraphrase than a translation; but it will certainly be found more pleasing than if it were nearly verbal.

*The Ruined Wall-Stone.*

The following fragment seems to be connected with the preceding; the "Ruined Wall-Stone," with the destruction of Finsburgh: —

"Rear'd and wrought full workmanly,  
 By earth's old giant progeny,  
 The Wall-Stone proudly stood. It fell  
 When bower, and hall, and citadel,  
 And lofty roof, and barrier gate,  
 And tower and turret, bow'd to fate;  
 And, wrapt in flames and drench'd in gore,  
 The lofty burgh might stand no more.  
 Beneath the Jute's long-vanish'd reign  
 Her masters ruled the subject plain;  
 But they have moulder'd side by side,  
 The vassal crowd, the chieftain's pride;  
 And hard the grasp of earth's embrace,  
 That shrouds for ever all the race.  
 So fade they, countless and unknown,  
 The generations that are gone.  
 Fain from her towers in spiry height,  
 From bower of pride and palace bright,  
 Echoing with shouts of warriors free,  
 And the gay mead hall's revelry;  
 Till fate's stern hour and slaughter day  
 Swept in one ruin all away,  
 And hurl'd in common silence all,  
 War shout and voice of festival.  
 Their towers of strength are humbled low,  
 Their halls of mirth waste ruins now,  
 That seem to mourn, so sad and drear,  
 Their master's blood-stain'd sepulchre.  
 The purple bower of regal state  
 Roofless and stain'd and desolate,  
 Is scarce from meaner relics known,  
 The fragments of the shatter'd town.  
 Here store of heroes, rich as bold,  
 Elate of soul and bright with gold,  
 Don'd the proud garb of war that shone  
 With silvery band and precious stone.  
 So march'd they once in gorgeous train  
 In that high seat of wide domain.  
 How firmly stood in massy proof  
 The marble vault and fitted roof\*;

\* Stan hofu stodan. A somewhat free translation!

Till, all resistless in its course,  
 The fiery torrent roll'd its course ;  
 And the red wave and glaring flood .  
 Swept all beneath its bosom broad.\*

But the noblest of all the Anglo-Saxon poems is that of *Beowulf*; which, in fact, may be regarded as the most extraordinary production of the middle ages. It is the first attempt at epic or heroic poetry extant in any vernacular language of Europe. Whether it was written by a Dane or an Anglo-Saxon, can never, perhaps, be proved ; but that it was written by an inhabitant of East Anglia, the peculiar seat of the Danes during the tenth century, seems undoubted. Whether it were a Dane or an Anglo-Saxon of that province, might, at first view, appear easy of solution from interval evidence alone ; but such was the similarity of the two dialects, that either was perfectly intelligible to the other. It was, in fact, far easier for an ancient Dane to write in Anglo-Saxon, than for a modern one to write in Swedish, or a Spaniard in Portuguese. Probably, however, the Danes of East Angliagenerally used the vernacular dialect of the island. We think the author was a Dane, because the poem exhibits an acquaintance with the history and tradition of the Jutes and Finns which no native could well possess ; and an attachment to the people and scenes of the Jutish peninsula which no Anglo-Saxon could feel. What confirms this supposition, is the fact that the work contains none of those allusions to Anglo-Saxon history or manners which we might expect from a native. Yet Dr. Thorkelin, the editor of the only edition yet published †, is certainly wrong in ascribing it to a native of Denmark. In the first place, such a one was not likely even to know the dialect of this kingdom, much less to write in it with so much ease and purity. In the second place, the author was evidently a Christian ; yet Christianity was not the established religion of Den-

\* Conybeare's Illustrations, p. 251. Like the former extract, exceedingly periphrastic.

† Copenhagen, 1815.

mark prior to the reign of Canute the Great. Christians, indeed, there were in it a century before, but they were confined to the lowest of the people ; and even they, as we may perceive from the life of St. Anscar \*, easily reverted to their former idolatry. We know from the most unquestionable authority that the Danes who invaded this country in Alfred's reign were all pagans ; that, at a period much later, one of the Danish sovereigns had been compelled to fly from his indignant subject merely because he had embraced the new religion ; and that, even so late as 1012, when St. Elphege suffered martyrdom †, there was scarcely a Christian in the Danish camp — not one except the few individuals whom he himself had converted. It was one of Canute's first cares to send English missionaries to convert his hereditary subjects. Now, the only MS. remaining of this curious poem is believed to be as old as the tenth century, long before the faith of Christ was diffused in Denmark : but even if it be a century later, this fact need not change our opinion as to its antiquity. Who will venture to assert that it is the original — that it is not a transcription from a more ancient copy ? These two reasons — the language of the poem, and the Christianity of the author ; reasons which none of our critics appear to have weighed — afford us the strongest possible presumption that it could not be composed by a native of the Scandinavian kingdom. The presumption is equally strong that the author could not be an Anglo-Saxon. It is, in fact, the work of one whose mind was remarkably conversant with the yet lingering traditions of paganism ; traditions which, to a native, whose ancestors during four centuries had professed Christianity, must have long ceased to be known. For these reasons, we may, we think, safely ascribe it to some immediate descendant of the Danes, who in the reign of Alfred had been allowed to settle in East

\* See his life in Vol. II. of this work.

† See Vol. III. p. 304.

Anglia, and who, we know, had been persuaded to receive baptism. But that, even in the time of St. Odo, Christianity was not universally dominant in that province, is sufficiently proved by the fact that his father was a pagan, and that he himself was disinherited for what no doubt the fierce old Dane considered his apostasy.\* Still there can be no doubt that many of the inhabitants were true to the faith which they had so recently embraced. Among them, we think, was the author of *Beowulf*, whose mind, however, bears all the marks of a recent change of faith. In fact, he seems better acquainted with the spirit and traditions of the religion he had abandoned than of that he had embraced. †—So much for the country of the greatest poet that ever wrote in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. The history of the poem itself is soon related. The MS., which is in the Cotton library, was first noticed by Wanley; but such is the indifference of the English public to literature, that, though it was cursorily noticed by Warton ‡, it excited the serious attention of no scholar, until Mr. Turner, in his valuable History of the Anglo-Saxons, gave an analysis of it. That analysis, however, is by no means a satisfactory one; for, besides omitting the more interesting portions of the work, it is given in a style so rugged and barren, so inferior to that of the original, that it is exceedingly repulsive to the mere English reader. Great Homer himself would look very simple, if so translated, — may we not substitute, if so *done*? — into any other language. But this analysis has the still greater fault of confounding the events and the order of time, and thereby of distorting the whole course of the poem. The same objections will not wholly apply, to the sub-

\* See the life of St. Odo, Vol. III. p. 254.

† We lay no stress on the arbitrary assumption either that the Saxon poem is a translation from a Danish original, or that it is founded on a more ancient work in our own ancient language. We think the arguments we have adduced are sufficient to account for the pagan spirit of the poem.

‡ History of English Poetry, vol. i.

sequent version by Mr. Taylor \*, since it is more like modern English than that of Mr. Turner. Yet it is not only brief, and therefore unsatisfactory ; but the translator is open to the more serious charge of having utterly failed to comprehend either the thread or the circumstances of the narrative, which, in fact, he has so strangely confounded as to render inexplicable. It is therefore, worse than useless. Lastly, Mr. Conybeare † has given us an analysis, which, though much less literal, is better than either of the preceding, because as it occupies six times more space than Mr. Taylor's it is much the more complete ; in reality, it is the only notice of this very curious work at all deserving the name of analysis. Still it has one great defect, — *it is not always faithful* : sometimes it is rather a paraphrase or even an imitation, than a translation. Disgusted by the rugged inverted language of his predecessors, Mr. Conybeare evidently resolved to take the opposite extreme, — to make his version free, in order that it might be more elegant. Hence, as we are much dissatisfied with the first two, and do not altogether approve of the last, we will attempt a new analysis from the original to as great an extent as our very confined limits will permit. We may premise that the edition of Thorkelein is so full of blunders that it cannot safely be followed ; for which reason we avail ourselves, as much as we can, of the copious extracts given us by Mr. Conybeare. ‡

The poem of Beowulf is in forty-three cantos, preceded by an introduction, in which the praises of the chieftain of the great Skiold family are recorded. In Canto I. we are introduced to his descendant Hrothgar a king in Denmark at a time when that country was possessed by several reguli, all apparently sprung from some common ancestor. Though at the time the poem opens he was advanced in years, he had been renowned

\* Historic Survey of German Poetry, vol. i. p. 78, &c.

† Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p. 30, &c.

‡ Authorities, Thorkelein's Beowulf. Turner's Anglo-Saxons. Taylor's Historic Survey. Conybeare's Illustrations.

in his youth and manhood, both for his victories and for the construction of a famous palace, or "mead-hall," in which he entertained his warriors, and distributed his royal gifts. This hall, which was named Hertha, was widely celebrated in those days; there he was eager "to bestow on old and young, on all except the mob and strolling vagabonds, the things which God had given him." The manners of the times are well described in this and other passages; how, as he distributed his gifts, and the mead cup went round, the joyful hall resounded with revelry and the poet's harp. The bard was well versed in ancient lore; he could sing of men from the first origin of time. Sometimes he attempted a loftier strain, and sang how the Almighty had made the shining earth, encompassed by the flowing sea; how the glorious One had set on high the sun and moon to enlighten the inhabitants; how He had adorned all regions with trees and leaves, and fruits and flowers; how He had breathed life into all things. But the royal guests were not to enjoy unmolested the festive hour or the minstrel's song. There was a powerful being, a fell demon, who abode in mists, and fens, and darkness, or raged fearful over the wild wastes of Jutland. This was Grendel, a gigantic magician, descended from Cain; and, therefore, as lying under the curse of Heaven, exiled to the cheerless misty fens of this peninsula. The demon envied the happiness of man, and above all hated the Goths, who had deprived the ancient Jutes of their habitations.\* The sounds of joy which reached him in his dark abode raised to fury the storm of hate within him, and he resolved to destroy at midnight the sleeping nobles of Hrothgar. Accordingly, at that hour, when the Danes, "after the quaffing of their beer," were reposing in "the lofty mansion," the grim fiend stalked into the spacious apartment, and having with savage joy slain thirty of the ethelings, re-

\* Many antiquarians have strangely confounded the Goths and the Jutes, who, so far from being the same people, were for centuries hereditary enemies.



turned to his mysterious abode. The consternation of the king and court the following morning was of course unspeakable ; but how could they reach the supernatural murderer, who had sometimes been seen by mortal eyes flitting over the waste ? From the obscure language of Canto II. we may infer that Grendel paid, during twelve winters, frequent visits with the same purpose and the same success to the princely walls of Hrothgar. The king was in despair ; nor was his sorrow much assuaged by the murmurs of his people, who seemed to suspect, not very unreasonably, that he must have been privy to the nocturnal fate of so many victims. Canto III.—The news of this disaster and of Hrothgar's despair reached the ears of Beowulf, the hero of the poem. Who Beowulf was, is not easy to discover. He is called the "Thegn of Higlac, mighty among the Goths ;" and his mother was a princess of Higlac's house ; but where the kingdom of Higlac was situated it would be vain to enquire. Beowulf caused a ship to be prepared, with which he might pass over "the path of the swan," and aid the careworn Hrothgar. The ship was made ready, and he chose fifteen of his bravest warriors to accompany him. Having filled it with the weapons of war as it floated under the protecting cliffs, they embarked, and sought the recesses of the deep, where, driven by the favouring winds, the ship, like a sea-bird, pursued its rapid way. Before the evening of the second day they descried land, its sun-lighted cliff and hills. They soon disembarked, moored their vessel to the shore, clad themselves in their warlike garb, and gave thanks to God for so prosperous a passage. They were descried from his watchtower by the warden of the coast, who wondered what this hostile appearance could mean. He mounted his horse, rode down to the shore, and in a manner somewhat Homeric enquired, "Who are ye who thus in arms have directed your vessel over the watery way to these shores ? Know that I am the warden of this coast, lest any hostile ship should insult the country of the Dane." In the midst of his speech

the minister of Hrothgar seems to have suddenly stooped, surprised at the noble appearance of Beowulf. "Never have I seen a chief on land more martial than your leader. Much used to arms is he, as well his fair and noble look bespeaks him!" Before these "wanderers of the sea" proceeded farther in the Danish territory, he besought them to tell him whence they came, and what was their purpose. Canto IV.—Beowulf replied, that they were of Gothic race, the warriors of Higlac; that he was of noble descent, the son of Egtheow, a thane famed for wisdom in his day; that their purpose was peaceful; it was to seek the son of Healfden (Hrothgar), and to defend him and his people against the mysterious enemy of the skioilding, which nightly carried destruction into the halls of the king. After this explanation they were welcomed by the old warden, who allowed them to proceed. Canto V.—The way, we are told, was paved with stone,—a degree of civilisation which seems scarcely reconcilable with the description of the times. They hastened along it, shining in their armour, which changed as they strode; and on reaching the towers of Hertha, they hung their ample shields against the wall, and sat down. They were accosted by one of Hrothgar's guards, Wulfgar, who seems at first to have doubted whether their purpose was peaceful or hostile; but his suspicions were soon dispelled. This guard, we are incidentally informed, was of Wendla or Vandalic race, and much renowned for his wisdom and valour: he promised to bear the message of the stranger to the king:—

"I will acquaint the friendly king of the Danes, the noble Shioilding, the giver of bracelets, the illustrious ruler, with thy voyage and message; and quickly will I bring back to thee such answer as his goodness may vouchsafe."

So Wulfgar entered the hall, where Hrothgar, "old and bald," was sitting in the midst of his warriors. Canto VI.—Having learned the name and business of his new guest, the king observed that he knew Beowulf

when a child, as the son of the noble Egtheow, who had married a princess of his own house ; that fame represented his strength as equal to that of thirty men ; that his arrival seemed to be the work of Heaven ; that he and his companions should be welcomed with open arms, and that noble should be his reward if he could free the country from the dreaded Grendel. In conformity with his commands, Beowulf and his companions are introduced. The address of this hero, who, in a manner characteristic of an age when, as much depended on a single arm, a single hero might be allowed to boast, is not destitute of dramatic effect.

“ King Hrothgar, hail ! Of Higlac behold the kinsman and the thegn ; nor few nor small are the deeds which I have wrought in my prime. In my own country have I learned the wrong done thee by this Grendel. Mariners say that this noble hall, after the evening sun falls bel w the sky, has been shorn of certain inmates. So by my followers, brave men and wise, have I been urged to seek thee, Hrothgar, for they sure know my prowess ; they have seen me return dyed in blood from conflict with the enemy, when in my grasp five valiant Jutes at once compressed, were hurled beneath the waves. And now am I ready to engage with this malignant Grendel ; alone will I assail him. I have heard, indeed, that on this demon's skin no mortal weapon can inflict a wound ; but for this I care not ; for without sword or ample shield, I will essay the combat, and hopeful to win the praise of my liege lord Higlac. Trusting to my hands — alone will I go against this enemy, and strive for life or death ; the fierce with the fierce, and then let Heaven decide whether of the two shall fall. If the weird sisters call me, fail not, king Hrothgar, to bring my bloody corpse, and let each passer-by add, without a tear or sigh, a stone to my funeral barrow, enclosed within the circle. No need is there that thou shouldst long pay my corpse the mournful rites. If Hilda call me, save from my spoils, and send to royal Higlac the precious mail which guards my breast, the noble art of Weland. And now ready am I, befall what may.” \*

Canto VII.—Hrothgar expresses his gratitude for the seasonable offer, praises the hero and his father, and next proceeds to relate the bloody deeds of Grendel.

\* Thorkelin, *Beowulf*, p. 1—36. Conybeare, p. 82—86.

“ Often have my heroes, when inspired by the cup, resolved to wait in the festive hall, well armed and bold, dark Grendel’s coming. Alas ! at dawn of day this hall of mead, this royal palace was stained with blood, all its benches horrible with the stiffened gore.” He invited the heroes to be seated at the festive board,—the never-failing enjoyment of all the Germanic chiefs. The palace of every king in his “ mead-hall,” and of his liberality in other respects, we may form an idea from his being significantly called “ the giver of bracelets.” Cantos VIII. and IX. are very characteristic of the times ; while the nobles were at table, before the monarch joined them, Hunferth, a minister of Hrothgar, already jealous of Beowulf’s favour with his master, taunts the hero with his piratical exploits,—a profession which was fortunately becoming disreputable, even to the savage Scandinavians, and tells him that, if he dare to engage the Grendel, he may bid adieu to light and life. Beowulf receives the taunt in good humour ; ascribes it to the mead cup ; and, to diminish the rashness of the projected enterprise, relates some marvellous deeds which he had accomplished. In the midst of the debate, the king enters, accompanied by his queen Wealtheowa. “ She, encircled with gold, mindful of her high descent, greeted the warrior in the hall ; the royal lady gave the cup to the noblest of the East Danes.” She praised her guest as she graciously presented the mead, and expressed her gratitude to Heaven that a warrior was arrived from whom such things were to be hoped. Beowulf replied to her courtesy, and asserted his resolution of engaging in the combat : she then proceeded smiling to her seat by the side of her royal husband ; the cup continued to flow, the song to arise, the revelry to increase, until Hrothgar, who, though a barbarian, was not unmindful of the decorum becoming his station, arose, committed to Beowulf the defence of his palace during the night, and retired to rest. Canto X.—Beowulf now disarms, delivers his mail, helmet and sword to an attendant, with the ex-

pression of his conviction that they could be of no use to him, and laid himself down to rest, in the midst of his friends. They seem at first to have been terribly alarmed, that this Grendel would surprise them, and that they should see their country no more ; but in a little while sleep was more powerful than apprehension, and all were buried in unconsciousness, save one.

Canto XI. introduces us to this mysterious being : we attempt the scene in blank verse, prose being scarcely admissible here.

Over the moor, beneath his misty hills  
 The Grendel stalk'd, — the fiend by heaven accurs'd ! —  
 And well he hop'd, this foe to human-kind,  
 Within that lofty hall to seize his victims.  
 In darkness wrapt, the silent fiend approach'd,  
 Until that festive hall, that golden seat  
 Of high-born warriors, rich with goblets strewn,  
 Before him lay. Nor this the only time  
 That he the courts of princely Hrothgar sought.  
 But never in the days of yore had he  
 Leaders more brave, or thanes more dauntless found  
 Than in that hall reposed.

Onward he stalk'd,  
 That being joyless. Swift the wrathful fiend  
 With arm of might the massive bulwarks rent,  
 That vainly stopt his entrance. O'er the floor  
 With shining stones resplendent strode the fiend ;  
 Dark was his mood, and terrible the flame,  
 Which from his lurid eyeballs flash'd around.  
 Many the sleepers in that festive hall,  
 By friendship, or by nearer kindred join'd :  
 Great was the demon's joy ; for well he thought,  
 That prowler awful, ere the morning dawn'd  
 Of each the soul and frame to rend asunder.  
 Grim was his smile, to see the banquet spread,  
 It seem'd as if, obedient to his wish,  
 Fortune that night so many victims sent  
 To please his gory tooth.

In purpose firm  
 Higlac's brave kinsman watch'd ; and much he mused  
 How he within his sudden grasp might close  
 The hated foe. Nor sluggish was the Grendel ;

In former visits little had it cost  
 To seize his sleeping victims, and their bones  
 To crush exultingly, while from the veins  
 The purple current stream'd. But of the limbs  
 Lifeless and mangled, feet and hands alone  
 Became his horrid repast.

Near he drew,  
 And with his hands the waking chieftain seized,  
 On couch reclined. But swifter rose the thane,  
 And in his sudden grasp, the demon dash'd  
 Against the floor resplendent. Sore dismay'd,  
 The Grendel felt that in his wanderings  
 Throughout the regions of the middle earth,  
 Never had stronger man his grasp assail'd.  
 In terror sudden, much the monster wish'd  
 To flee precipitate; in darkness wrapt,  
 To seek the shelter of his demon home." \*

But the monster was not allowed thus easily to escape; he was still grappled by Beowulf, and though he often eluded the grasp, which was certainly one of iron, since it left strange marks on his flesh, he could not for some time escape from the hall. The conflict between the two combatants was so fierce, that the poet wonders how the hall could bear the concussion; it must have fallen, he says, had it not been firmly girt around with iron; the sounds raised by the demon reached even the wardens on the castle wall, "who dreaded much to hear the howling of the enemy." "No sounds of triumph they, raised by the captive of hell, as he felt the iron grasp of the strongest of mankind." Canto XII.—"At length the demon's body bore marks of the conflict; his shoulder presented a ghastly wound, his limbs were loosed, his joints forced from their

\* Thorkelin, *Beowulf*, p. 36—56. Saxon text in Conybeare, p. 96—101.

If the reader will open the translations of Turner and Taylor, he will be surprised at their difference from the one above. The former evidently gave the poem a very hasty glance; the latter has scarcely comprehended any part of it. But who will detract from Mr. Turner's merits as a Saxon scholar? What student does not owe him a debt of gratitude? The poem is a very obscure one—so indeed are all the Saxon poems—nor should we have had courage to venture on a new analysis from Thorkelin's edition alone. To Mr. Conybeare is the world obliged for the first intelligible view of this curious relic. How came Mr. Taylor to publish his very inaccurate one *four* years after the appearance of Mr. Conybeare's?

sockets. At length, too, he was able to seek his joyless home, the morasses of the mountain ;” but sorrowfully he fled, “ for well he knew that his end was near.” If indeed we understand the passage right, he appears to have left one arm behind him, which Beowulf preserved as a trophy of his victory.\*

The next six cantos are chiefly occupied with the rejoicings of Hrothgar’s court, on the defeat of the Grendel, in the firm persuasion that he would return no more, and on the rewards lavishly bestowed on the victor. Over these festive scenes, adorned by the never-failing accompaniments, the bardic song and the mead cup, we take a spring ; they are every where much the same, from Homer’s days to Beowulf’s ; enlivened sometimes, indeed, by the digression of the poet’s song, but in the present case that episode is so obscure — relating apparently to a successful expedition once undertaken against the Finns — that we willingly leave it. Canto XIX. introduces us to another demon,—a female this time, the mother of Grendel, who, eager to revenge the death of her son, stalks at midnight into the hall to glut herself with victims. But her power was inferior to her son’s : though Beowulf was not sleeping there, the warriors seized their arms and put her to flight. The old lady, however, resolved to do some mischief, carries bodily off Eschere, one of Hrothgar’s favourite thanes. Canto XX.—The next morning we have another picture of the king’s grief, who refuses to hear of consolation, until Beowulf engages to storm the monster’s den, to kill both (he could not know that Grendel was dead), and thus rid his royal friend of all future apprehension, or else perish in the attempt. Hrothgar tells him that the two demons had been seen roaming over the moors, and that their habitation was not far distant.

“ There that foul spirit, howling as the wolves,  
 Holds, by the perilous passage of the fen,  
 Rude crag, and trackless steep, his dark abode ;

\* Thorkelin’s Beowulf. Conybeare’s Saxon text, *ubi supra*.

Then from the headlong cliff rolls arrowy down  
 The fiery stream, whose wild and wondrous waves  
 The fragrant and fast-rooted wood o'erhangs,  
 Spreading them o'er, as with the warrior's helm.  
 There nightly may'st thou see a sight of dread,  
 The flood of living flame."

The place, too, was further defended by storm, and hurricane, and magic charm. Canto XXI.—But nothing could shake Beowulf, who sagely observed, that man must once die; that the time when was of very little consequence, provided he did such deeds as must be approved by Heaven. He swore that he would pursue the fiend to the deepest caverns of the earth, to the impenetrable shades of the forests, even to the depths of the ocean. The grateful Hrothgar orders a chosen band to be prepared, and, mounting his steed, conducts Beowulf towards the mysterious abode:—

"And now the heroes trod  
 The mountain pass, a steep and uncouth way,  
 By cliff and cavern'd rock that housed within  
 The monsters of the flood: before them sped  
 Four chosen guides, and track'd the uncertain road.  
 Now paused they where the pine-grove clad  
 The hoar rock's brow, a dark and joyless shade;  
 Troublous and blood-stain'd roll'd the stream below,  
 Sorrow and dread were on the Scylding's host,  
 In each man's breast deep working; for they saw  
 On that rude cliff, young Eschere's mangled head.  
 Now blew the signal horn, and the stout thanes  
 Address'd themselves to battle; for that strand  
 Was held by many a fell and uncouth foe,  
 Monster, and worm, and dragon, of the deep."\*

There were other monsters besides Grendel and his mother, but not having the human form: these, which inhabited the lake, were destroyed, and dragged to the beach. It was evident that the old beldame fiend was in the depths of the abyss. But Beowulf remembered his promise, and he resolved to plunge into it. Being

\* These are Mr. Conybeare's lines, and we are afraid our unpractised attempts must look very simple beside them.



well armed — with a helmet which had been made by magic hands, by the celebrated dwarfs of Scandinavian mythology,\* which bade defiance to every weapon; and with a sword no less magical, called Hrunting, — and having addressed a few words to Hrothgar, whom he might see no more (Canto XXII), the hero plunged into the deep abyss. The mother fiend, from her fathomless haunts, quickly perceived that some mortal had entered the lake. She ascended, and dragged him to the very bottom. Here it might be supposed his life would soon be terminated; but, no! he found, to his surprise, that the element had no effect on him, and that the assaults of the monsters by whom the she-fiend was defended were as innocent. He was now, however, in the place where “he saw the fire-light brightly shine with its deep rays;” and where his sword, Hrunting, that had never yet failed him, proved of no avail, — no more than it would on the magic hide of Grendel. In anger, he cast it from him, and renewed the contest with his arms alone. But though he grappled powerfully, and for a long period, his strength, at last, began to give way — probably, because the old hag was in her natural element, — and she struck him a tremendous blow, which must have been fatal had nothing but his armour, excellent as it was, defended him: but he had also the protection of fate; for (Canto XXIII.), at this critical moment, a huge sword descended the flood: —

“Eald sword Eotenisc,”

“An old *Jutish* sword,” for Eotenisc may be so rendered; and by the Jutes we are to understand the old magic race of the giants. “Beowulf looked at the weapon; but it was greater than any other man could have wielded in battle: good and shining, it was truly a giant’s work.” He instantly seized it, and wielded it with so much vigour, that he soon drove it through the old beldame’s neck, and ended her accursed existence. At this moment “a light suddenly shone, light from

below, as if the glorious lamp of heaven were there." The victor, now enlightened in his path, sought on every side for Grendel, whose corpse he found. One blow with his magic weapon severed the head from the body; and the blood which flowed from it, and from the body of the mother, rose to the surface of the lake, making both king and warriors naturally fear that all was over with their champion. In this conviction Hrothgar sorrowfully returned "to the banquet;" but Beowulf's faithful companions remained, and had soon the gratification to perceive the victor emerge, with the monster's head, from the deep abyss. A new portent amazed them: the very sword which he had used, and which was dripping with blood, melted — such was the force of the venom — and fell, in a liquid state, on the ground, nothing remaining except the hilt. On every side the enchantment was finished; the hurricane subsided; the dashing waves fell to complete calmness. The warriors now returned to the court of Hrothgar, four being required to bear the head of Grendel, which was triumphantly borne into the "hall of mead." The six following cantos are occupied with the rejoicings of the king, his grateful presents, his festive entertainments, and the return of Beowulf to the court of Higlac, where, of course, endless feasting awaited him. He relates to his liege lord his late exploits, not forgetting to extol himself; and he is rewarded by the gift of an earldom, with 7000 vassals. In Canto XXX. we find that, on the death of Higlac and his son, who appear to have fallen in battle, Beowulf was called to the throne of the Scylfings.\*

It might here be expected that the poem would end: but, no! there yet remain thirteen cantos, or about one third of the whole; — a portion less poetical, perhaps, but in the same wild strain, in the same perfect accordance with the Scaldic manner. But the hero's next adventure is reserved to the fiftieth year of his reign,

\* Thorkelin's *Beowulf*, p. 58—176 Saxon text in Conybeare, down to page 114.

when, as he must necessarily be weakened by age, he can suffer no great dishonour by being killed. His reign was prosperous and happy, until "the wanderer of the gloomy night, the fire dragon came." This dragon had a den in some wild place not far from Beowulf's capital, — a barrow, defended not only by it, but by a supernatural everlasting fire, and filled with countless treasures, over which the monster brooded.\* During "300 winters" the fire dragon had been peaceable, but some of Beowulf's subjects having taken advantage of its sleep to plunder a portion of the treasures, the indignant monster began to make nocturnal depredations to the very walls of the city, laying waste the country, and destroying every living thing that fell in his way. Nay, the fire which he breathed threatened to melt the very walls, as it had already consumed the fairest "mead-hall" of the king. In this emergency, cooped up as the inhabitants were within towers which promised, ere long, to avail them little, Beowulf resolved to deliver them, or to perish in the attempt.

" All dauntless then, and stern beneath his shield,  
 The hero rose, and toward the rocky cliff  
 Bore gallantly in helm and mail of proof;  
 In one man's strength (not such the coward's art)  
 Confiding. Now that fabric might he spy,  
 He that so oft had in the crash of arms  
 Done goodly service.  
 Firm rose the stone-wrought vault, a living stream  
 Burst from the barrow, red with ceaseless flame,  
 That turret glow'd; nor lived there soul of man  
 Might tempt the dread abyss, nor feel its rage.  
 So watch'd the fire-drake o'er his hoard — and now  
 Deep from his labouring breast the indignant Goth  
 Gave utterance to the war cry. Loud and clear  
 Beneath the hoar stone rang the deafening sound,

\* The classical reader will recollect the expedition of the Argonauts. That serpents or dragons watched over exhaustless treasures was the universal belief of the Scandinavian natives, whose cradle was probably the region where Jason landed. See *Saxo Grammaticus*, lib. ii. The same opinion was common to the Egyptians, the Persians, the Arabians, and other nations.

And strife uprose : — the watcher of the gold  
 Had mark'd the voice of man. First from his lair,  
 Shaking firm earth, and vomiting, as he strode,  
 A foul and fiery blast, the monster came.  
 Yet stood beneath the barrow's lofty side  
 The Goth's unshaken champion, and opposed  
 To that infuriate foe his full-orb'd shield.  
 Then the good war king bared his trenchant blade ;  
 Tried was its edge of old, the stranger's dread,  
 And keen to work the foul aggressor's woe."

A contest commenced, when —

" The kingly Goth  
 Rear'd high his sword and smote the grisly foe ;  
 But the dark steel upon the unyielding mail  
 Fell impotent, nor served its master's need,  
 Now at his utmost peril. Nor less that stroke  
 To madd'ning mood the barrow's warder roused ;  
 Out burst the flame of strife, the blaze of war  
 Beam'd horribly ; still no triumph won the Goth,  
 Still fail'd his keen brand in the unequal fray  
 (So wonted not that tried and trusty steel) ;  
 Now fain would Egtheow's gallant son retreat,  
 And change that battle-plain for tower and town."

The royal attendants, instead of assisting their master, either fled, or continued inactive spectators. One of them, however, Wiglaf, when he thought of the rich domain he had received from the king, and the vassal homage which he owed, resolved, as in duty bound, to aid him. He seized his helmet, his shield, and his sword, and, rushing through the fiery stream, bid the king perceive that his faithful thane was present, while he firmly assailed the dragon. In the end, the king pierced the monster to the heart ; but, in the conflict, he had received a wound, which now burned furiously, and clearly announced his immediate death. In his last moments, however, he was gratified with the boundless treasures which were found by Wiglaf in the barrow. His last words were characteristic : —

“ Old am I now, but in my youth have won  
 And shared the treasured gold. Now thanks be thine  
 Eternal Father, glorious Lord of all!  
 Thanks from thy creature's lips, for that his eye  
 Hath seen those hoarded spoils; for that his hand,  
 Ere yet thy doom o'ertake him, hath achieved  
 To his loved people's weal this rich bequest.

“ And now  
 Short while I tarry here — when I am gone,  
 Bid them upon yon headland's summit rear  
 A lofty mound by Rona's sea-girt cliff;  
 So shall my people hold to after-times  
 Their chieftain's memory, and the mariners  
 That drive afar to sea, oft as they pass,  
 Shall point to Beowulf's tomb.”

After presenting Wiglaf, whom he nominated his heir, with the ornaments of royalty, and his own armour, he bade him reign prosperously: —

“ For thou alone art left of all our kin,  
 The voice of Heaven to their eternal doom,  
 Save thee, hath summon'd all the Scylding's race;  
 And, lo! I join my fathers.”

The remaining cantos are occupied with the election of Wiglaf, the funeral of Beowulf, and the description of the treasures left by the fire-drake.\*

Such is an extremely brief, and therefore, imperfect view of this very curious poem. That it should so long have remained unnoticed, containing as it does not only imaginative descriptions of a very high order, but perpetual allusions to the ancient opinions of our Saxon ancestors, might surprise us, if we did not know that hitherto scarcely any attention has been paid to their literature. The Record Commission may slowly accumulate useless rubbish — meagre dates and facts, which even the antiquary will not consult, — but neither government nor people, neither university nor literary club, will bring to light the mouldering relics of other days. Many poems still remain, among which the

\* Thorkelein's *Beowulf*, p. 137—136. Conybeare's *Illustrations*, p. 65—71.

Metrical Chronicle of Britain, supposed to have been written by Layaman, a priest on the Severn, early in the thirteenth century, is said to be not the least remarkable. This, however, we have not seen, and we will offer no opinion concerning it; except to express our regret that it has not yet been published. A learned Dane would have presented us with this and many other treasures, had we allowed him. Let us hear his language as to *Beowulf*: —

“ This poem, though published abroad fifteen years ago, where it has excited considerable attention, seems almost unknown to the English literary world. And yet it is the earliest known attempt, in any vernacular dialect of modern Europe, to produce an epic poem: and far from being a dull and tedious imitation of some Greek or Latin examples, — like most modern epics — it is an original Gothic performance; and if there be in me any spark of poetic feeling, I have no hesitation in affirming that any poet, of any age, might have been proud to produce such a work, while the country which gave it birth might well be pleased of him in return. I know there are tastes called classical, which will turn away in disgust when they are told that the poem consists of two fabulous adventures, not very artificially connected, except by the person of the hero; and that these episodes, which relate to historical traditions of the north, are rather unskillfully inserted. But I think such classical scholars as have a squeamish repugnance to all Gothic productions, should remember that when they settle themselves down in the little circle of the ancient world, they have banished themselves from the modern, and, consequently, have made their opinions on such a subject of very little importance. Hence, without calling that artificial which is rude, or that masterly which is childish, whether of ancient or modern date, I will merely observe, that *Beowulf*, the Gothic hero of the poem, combats, in the prime of his life, with *Grendel* and his mother, two goblins who are the foes of *Hrothgar* king of Denmark; and in his old age fights with *Steore-heort*, the fiery dragon, which during a thousand years has brooded over unprofitable gold, and in this encounter, though victorious, he loses his life. Now it is evident that such a tale may be told in a very absurd manner; but it is equally clear that it may also be embodied in a very lofty and interesting strain: for my own part, I have no desire for the converse of any man who would not be delighted with the simple yet animated dialogue, the beautiful descriptions, and

“ Old am I now, but in my youth have won  
 And shared the treasured gold. Now thanks be thine  
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the noble sentiments which abound in Beowulf. When I also remember how distinctly and vividly the characters of the principal personages are drawn and supported, — of Beowulf, the hero — of Wiglaf, his youthful and enthusiastic friend — of Hrothgar, the royal bard and philosopher; I cannot but feel regret that time has not spared us the name of this early Gothic Homer, and my wonder is lessened, that a master-spirit like Shakspeare could arise in the country where the very children of her poetry should have attempted and achieved such master-strokes of genius."

Dr. Grundtvig may reproach the literary indifference of the English with whatever force he is able\*; he will make no impression on either the government or the people. The truth is, that we are not a literary nation; that, with much pretension, we have little claim to the distinction. Instances of neglect more disgraceful than even that of Beowulf might easily be enumerated; but such an exposition would be useless. While almost every other country in Europe is making rapid strides in literary glory, England, by her indifference to every species of sound literature, is as rapidly retrograding: in works, whether of learning or of genius, her modern press is below that of Germany, or France, or Italy, or the Scandinavian kingdoms, or even Spain; so that, in time, she bids fair to reach the level of Portugal.† Neither to our universities in a corporate nor to their professors in an individual capacity; neither to our established church, nor to our literary *coteries*, is literature in the slightest degree indebted: on the contrary, all are hostile to its interests.

\* The contempt which he sometimes expresses, and which he every where intimates, for the current literature of this country, is most richly warranted. Englishmen as we are, we thank him for the lesson, even though it will have no effect.

† Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 286. Taylor, *Historic View of German Poetry*, vol. i. p. 78. Grundtvig, "Prospectus and Proposals of a subscription for the Publication of the most valuable Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts, illustrative of the early Poetry and Literature of our Language, most of which have never yet been printed."

What is become of this eminent scholar and his "Proposals?" Could not EIGHTY subscribers' names be procured? (see condition 3. of subscription,) or has the editor, *as is reported*, from some cause still more disgraceful to the country, left it in disgust? In either case we regret his relinquishment of the design: — 1st, Because if it should ever be entrusted to the Record Commission, it will not be so ably executed. 2dly, Because such a commission would spend as many years over it as any individual of ordinary diligence would spend months.

There are many other remnants of Saxon antiquity, few of which have been printed. They are, indeed, of a character not likely to find favour with the public; yet from them many hints might be derived, which, though individually without much value, would, in the aggregate, throw considerable light on the history of manners. Unfortunately there are none professedly historic, except the Saxon Chronicle, and a few fragments. The mass consists of lives of saints, homilies, translations, or expositions of Scripture, and on points of discipline. It has, however, long been well known, that hagiology is capable of contributing something to our historic knowledge; and, though this fact has made no impression in England, it has been otherwise in France and Germany. Such indefatigable searchers into the hidden stores of hagiology as Mabillon and the Bollandists, have done more for history than writers of far prouder names. From these Saxon remains, however, we will extract only a short homily, apparently addressed to ecclesiastics only. It will enable the reader to form a tolerable notion of the religion and pulpit eloquence of the times.\*

“ I beseech and enjoin you, dearest men, that in this life you deeply bewail your sins, since in the life to come your lamentations will be of no avail. Here let us listen to the Lord, who desires us to accept remission of sins. Here his clemency is surpassing; hereafter he will be inexorably severe. Here his mercy is over us; hereafter will be eternal judgment. Here we may have temporal joy, but there anguish without end. Here are the delights of time; there eternal tortures. Here is laughing; there shall wailing be: there shall our sumptuous raiment be spread over eternal flames. Here we have pride of mind; there will be its inevitable result, darkness enduring.† Strive, dearly beloved, after things future; always be solicitous about your souls. weep in this world, that you may not weep in the world to come. Beware lest you be there humbled, lest you be sent into darkness that may be felt, into fire that may not be quenched. Who, dearest brethren, is so

\* Part only of this homily has yet been translated (by Mr. Turner, vol. iii. p. 503.), and that very inadequately, and in some parts unfaithfully.

† Periphrasis, as we have before observed, is the great sin of the Saxon writers.

hardened as not to bewail and dread the wrath to come? What, I ask, is better for us in this world than always to do penance for our sins, and to redeem them by almsgiving, by which we may escape everlasting punishment when this world and all that is in it shall pass away, and when purity of soul alone can satisfy Almighty God? • There the father cannot aid the son, nor the son the father, but every one will be judged according to his works. Man! what art thou doing? be not like the brute beasts: think and reflect on the difference which God has drawn between us; he has conferred on us an understanding soul, which brutes have not. Oh man! watch! pray! beseech while thou hast the power. Remember that for thy sake God descended from his high estate, and took upon him a lowly one, that by so doing he might raise them to the life supernal! Vain will be gold and silver to deliver us from that pain, that fire unquenchable, those serpents undying, which now whet their gory teeth to wound and lacerate our bodies without mercy, when the great trumpet shall sound, and a voice exclaim, *to those who have truly fasted* †, ‘Arise, beloved of Christ! behold your heavenly King! Your immortal Bridegroom approaches; ye shall now see him whom you loved before your bodies became dust! Arise, and behold the great and terrible King! Come and receive that glory which God will this day bestow upon you, — which eye hath not beheld, which ear hath not heard, which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive!’ On the contrary, how different his language to sinners: — ‘Ye impious and wicked, too, arise! for, behold, this very day, shall ye be left in the infernal gulf in which you felicit; glory and rejoicing shall be exchanged for sorrow!’ How wretched, how unhappy they, who, because they have neglected the commands of God, must hear this terrible sentence! Let us not follow them; but let us always have the hour of death before our eyes; because the glory of this world is short, and frail, and fleeting, and worldly things are poor. Where are the kings who were once among us, — where the mighty of this world? where is their gold, where their precious garments? Ah, how lamentable the exchange, — for a short life, eternal death! for a brief glory, enduring sorrow! for a gleam of light, darkness appalling! for a small enjoyment,

\* “What is better to us in this world than to be penitent for our transgressions, and to redeem them by almsgiving?” *Turner’s translation.* He has thus rendered the passage with the view of suppressing the Roman catholic doctrine obviously contained in the original, — *penance*.

If we should find catholicism, or Mohammedanism, or paganism, or devilism, in our ancient authors, what is our duty? To render it faithfully. Surely the historian is not to be implicated in opinions which, though he records, he may condemn.

† Meaning, those who have mortified the fleshly lusts — wholly omitted by Mr. Turner.

pains so cruel and pitiful ! for a short laugh, tears so bitter and everlasting ! There is darkness thick and fire unquenchable ! there are horrid tormenting prisons ! there agonies without end, there chastisements unspeakable, are reserved for the wretches who despise the commandments of God : to them shall no rest be vouchsafed, except on that day when Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. Now hear the spiritual vision of a certain holy man. He saw the soul of one forced to leave the body ; but the soul durst not issue forth, because she saw execrable fiends standing before the body. ‘What art thou doing?’ enquired one devil, ‘why not come out? Will Michael the archangel with a legion of angels come to carry thee away?’— ‘No fear of that!’ replied another devil: ‘I know this soul well; day and night was I with her!’ When the soul saw and heard these things, she began miserably to cry, and to exclaim, ‘Woe unto me that I was ever born! that I ever entered this impure accursed body! Then looking at it, she said, ‘Vile wretch, it was thou which didst seize the substance of other men, which was always intent on laying up treasures on earth, which arrayedst thyself in sumptuous apparel; when thou wast scarlet, I was black; thou wast cheerful, but I was sorrowful; thou didst rejoice while I wept. Now thou art a loathsome corpse, fit food for worms; a time thou mayest remain here; but while I in misery and wailing must be led to hell, let the body also be afflicted with various torments.’ And the devil cried out, ‘Pierce his eyes! because with them he planned all manner of injustice: pierce his mouth! because with it he ate and drank what he pleased, and uttered what he pleased: pierce his heart! because in it there was no religion, mercy, or love of God.’ These things sorely afflicted that miserable soul, to which they fastened very black wings; and when they were taking it away, it suddenly beheld a glorious light, and it asked the devils what this meant. And they replied, ‘Dost thou not remember, that it is that celestial glory and joy from which thou wast taken when thou didst enter the body? Now shalt thou pass through these beautiful mansions, but there thou must not remain: now shalt thou hear the angelic hosts, and the glory of the saints; but there thou art not permitted to stay!’ Again the wretched soul with much anguish wept and said, ‘Woe unto me that ever I beheld the light of the world!’ The devils conducted it wailing and groaning, and delivered it to certain fiery dragons, which breathed flame and brimstone; and into the raging furnace of their open jaws it was cast. Wherefore, dearest brethren, let us place this before our eyes as a warning; let us acknowledge and believe that such punishments await the wicked. But let us never distrust the mercy of God. It be-

comes us to aspire, with all humility, to that eternal joy, where there is no fear of death, no temptation of the devil; where there is youth without age, light without darkness, gladness without sorrow, rest without labour; where the vernal roses bloom, where nothing decays; where groans, or lamentation, or weeping is never heard; where pain is never seen or felt, where no degree of sorrow or bitterness is found; where the thunder does not roar, nor the lightnings flash; where is heard the constant harmony of angels and archangels in the presence of the supreme King. Wherefore, dearest men, let us remember how short, sinful, frail, fleeting, wretched, and deceitful, the life in which we live to all who love it; that in trouble we live, in sorrow we die; and that, after this life, the miserable sinners who now refuse to do penance for their transgression \* and to give alms, shall be led away to everlasting torments. Thus the afflicted soul shall be suspended over the hot fire, — shall be beaten, bound, and sent into utter darkness, — the fate especially of those who show no mercy in this life towards other sinners. Let us direct our minds towards a better state, and strive for an everlasting kingdom with Christ and his saints. Amen.”

The preceding discourse is sufficiently rude; displaying no enlightened notions of religion, little taste, less judgment. It is vehement, enthusiastic, unconnected, seeking to amend rather by fleeting impressions than by established principles; calculated for present effect, rather than for permanent utility; appealing to transient feeling, not to sober reasoning. How different this strain from the sober, rational, yet not less earnest tone of St. Cesarius of Arles! † Doubtless, however, the motive of fear in that age would be most powerful; the minds of the people in general might probably be too hardened to be affected by one more amiable, — by the principle of love; they might be more easily terrified from sin than allured to virtue. The Saxon ecclesiastics have their imitators in our own day. Whoever wishes to see more of our ancient vernacular literature may turn to Mr. Turner’s History, valuable with all its faults, to Wanley on the Saxon MS.; to Conybeare’s Illustrations of Saxon Poetry.‡

\* “Who would not repent.” Turner’s translation.

† Vol. II. p. 226.

‡ Liber Legum Ecclesiasticarum, p. 171. (apud Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicae.)

Before we leave this subject, however, we must say a few words in praise of archbishop Elfric:—

“ It had been the frequent complaint of Alfred, that every species of learning was concealed under the obscurity of a foreign language; and Elfric, after the example of the king, laboured to instruct the ignorance of his countrymen, by translating and publishing several treatises in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. Of these the most celebrated are his versions of different parts of the Holy Scriptures, and his three books of catholic homilies. As a translator he cannot claim the praise of fidelity. Many passages of the original he has thought proper to omit: some he has condescended to improve by explanatory additions; and in others, where he conceives the Latin text to be obscure, he has not scrupled to substitute his own interpretation for the expressions of the inspired writer. Through the whole of the work he appears to have been alarmed lest his illiterate countrymen should assume the conduct of the ancient patriarchs as a justification of their own irregularities. To prevent so dangerous an error, he anxiously inculcates the difference between the Old and the New Testaments; remarks that the former was a figure of the latter; and exhorts his reader to observe the law of Moses according to the spirit, that of Christ according to the letter. His homilies were written with the benevolent intention of assisting those clergymen who were too indolent or too illiterate to compose sermons for themselves. They are not original compositions. The only merit to which he aspires, is that of selecting, from preceding writers, passages appropriate to the gospel of the day; and of presenting them in a language adapted to the capacity of his hearers. As soon as the work was finished, he dedicated it to the archbishop Sigari, and humbly desired him to correct every error which his superior learning might discover. The labours of Elfric were not unrewarded. From the monastery of Abingdon he was transferred to the school at Winchester, and was successively made visitor of Cernly, abbot of St. Albans, bishop of Wilton, and archbishop of Canterbury.”

Elfric was not the only ecclesiastic who translated from the Latin into the vulgar tongue. Bede himself, as we shall see in the relation of his life in the present chapter, was engaged on the gospel of St. John, when death summoned him away; Alfred the Great attempted that of the Psalms, but died before half his task was

completed; and before his time the priest Aldred of Northumbria gave an interlineary version of the four gospels, now in the British Museum. Elfric's versions were very considerable; they comprehended Judges, part of Kings, Esther, Judith, and the Maccabees—proof enough that even, at this age, the books which criticism must regard as apocryphal, were received as canonical.\*

2. But it is in her *Latin* literature that the chief glory of England must be sought during the Anglo-Saxon times. Fortunate has it been for the interests of learning, if not of religion, that the performance of the church service in the Latin tongue was obligatory. “For the instruction of the people,” says Lingard, “the epistle and gospel were read, and the sermon was delivered in their native tongue; but God was always addressed by the ministers of religion in the language of Rome. The missionaries, who, from whatever country they came, had been accustomed to this rite from their infancy, would have deemed it a degradation of the sacrifice to subject it to the caprice and varieties of a barbarous idiom; and their disciples, who felt not the thirst of innovation, were proud to tread in the footsteps of their teachers.” Though service in an unknown tongue is an evil, we know not whether, with these peculiar opinions as to the mass, the Roman catholics are not right. The mass was a sacrifice, in which, though the people were exhorted to join, they were not expected to repeat all the prayers of the priest; but mental ones, more suitable to their wants and comprehension. It is certain, too, that, though they were present to adore and to pray, the chief means of edification were understood to consist in preaching, catechetical instruction, confession, penance, and the sacraments. Whether this policy was good or bad, is no concern of ours: it was at least consistent with itself. What follows is more to the point:—“The practice has been severely reprobated by the reformed theologians; but it was fortunate for

\* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 422. See also Wanley's MSS. *passim*.

mankind that the apostles of the northern nations were less wise than their modern critics. Had they adopted in the liturgy the language of their proselytes, the literature would probably have perished with the empire of Rome. By preserving the use of the Latin tongue, they imposed on the clergy the necessity of study, kept alive the spirit of improvement, and transmitted to future generations the writings of the classics, and the remnants of profane and ecclesiastical history." There can, indeed, be no doubt that to this policy of the Roman catholic church we are indebted for much of our modern civilisation. The functions of the priesthood necessarily required some portion of learning: they were exhorted to study the holy scripture, and the canons of the church: hence, if they must understand the service at all, they must have some acquaintance with the language in which it was contained. The experience of many centuries has proved beneficial to literature. The clergy have not always, nor indeed often, been satisfied with the moderate degree of learning necessary to interpret the service, or even to peruse the scriptures: they have recurred to the ancient fathers, and they have deviated into the wide field not only of classical, but of profane literature and history. Go wherever they might, the missionaries carried with them the torch of civilisation, often of erudition; and to their instructions, to their example, is modern Europe indebted for its intellectual glory. But for them, the treasures of the ancients would never have been transmitted to us: they preserved the originals; they multiplied by transcription the copies of the immortal authors, and rendered these authors intelligible from generation to generation. In this noble labour, the monks were particularly conspicuous. To those of England, Germany owes a vast debt of gratitude. They not only introduced the gospel into that wide empire, but from their monastery of Fulda\* they diffused, as

\* For the foundation of this celebrated monastery, and the labours of St. Boniface and other English missionaries, see Vol. II. p. 193, &c.



from a centre, the light of knowledge on every side. But that light England must have had before she could impart it to others. With St. Augustine arrived the dawn of a new glory. Of the books which he brought, or which pope St. Gregory transmitted to him, some are still extant in our public libraries. At Canterbury a school was immediately established: East Anglia had soon another; while several youths flocked to Ireland, a country comparatively free from political convulsion, to prosecute their studies in tranquillity. As the other kingdoms of the heptarchy received the faith of Christ, they also received a desire of knowledge, and were soon provided with schools and teachers. Both the monasteries and the colleges of secular clergy were filled with students. Of this mental culture Augustine and his companions laid the foundation only: the structure was raised by the hands of St. Theodore and Adrian the abbot. Though Theodore was sixty-six on his elevation to the see of Canterbury, he exhibited all the vigour of youth in the improvement of the people, no less than in the reformation of the clergy. Eminently versed in the languages of Greece and Rome, in all the literature and all the science of the period, in history civil and ecclesiastical, he and his friend made Kent the common fountain whence knowledge was poured over the land. The thanes, who had hitherto trampled on every species of mental improvement, now sent their children to be educated in the monasteries; several princes were soon ranked among the scholars of the period; and those who had no such ambition, had one scarcely less useful, that of patronising learning in others. To the success of Theodore and the abbot of St. Augustine in the noblest work ever undertaken by man, we have the unquestionable evidence of the venerable Bede, who says that some of their scholars were alive when he wrote, and were as well versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in the Saxon. "Never," he emphatically adds, "since the Angles arrived in Britain, were there more happy times

than this." In the north, St. Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop imitated the example of Theodore. The venerable Bede, the great luminary of the nation, and the most learned man in Western Europe, contributed in a degree beyond any other individual who ever lived, to the same object. Archbishop Egbert trod in their steps. At York he founded a library probably superior to that founded by St. Augustine at Canterbury, and augmented by St. Theodore. To Alcuin, who presided over the celebrated school of that city, the archbishop left the care of his books,—his *caras super omnia gazas*. That it was not inconsiderable, may be inferred from that imperfect catalogue by that writer:—

“ Illic invenies veterum vestigia Patrum,  
 Quidquid habet pro se Latio Romanus in orbe ;  
     vel quidquid transmisit clara Latinis ;  
 Hebraicus vel quod populus libit ore superno ;  
 Africa lucifero vel quidquid lumine sparsit.  
 Quod pater *Hieronymus*, quod sensit *Hilarius* atque,  
*Ambrosius* præsul, simul *Augustinus*, et ipse  
 Sanctus *Athanasius*, quod *Orosius* edit avitus,  
 Quidquid *Gregorius* summus docet et *Leo* papa :  
*Basilius* quidquid, *Fulgentius* atque coruscant,  
*Cassiodorus* item, *Chrysostomus* atque *Joannes*.  
 Quidquid et *Athelmus* docuit, quid *Beda* magister,  
 Quæ *Victorinus* scripsere, *Boetius*, atque  
 Historici veteres, *Pompeius*, *Plinius*, ipse  
*Aristoteles*, rhetor quoque *Tullius* ingens : •  
 Quid quoque *Sedulius*, vel quid canit ipse *Juvenus*  
*Alcuinus* et *Clemens*, *Prosper*, *Paulinus* Arator,  
 Quid *Fortunatus* vel quid *Lactantius* edunt,  
 Quæ *Maro* *Virgilius*, *Stadius*, *Lucanus*, et auctor  
 Artis grammaticæ, vel quid scripsere magistri,  
 Quid *Probus*, atque *Phocas*, *Donatus* *Priscianus*ve  
*Servius*, *Euticius*, *Pompeius*, *Comminianus*,  
 Invenies alios perplures.”

*Alcuinus de Pontificibus et Sanctis Eccl. Ebor.*

That this was but an imperfect list,—a few names among many,—is undoubted: it does not contain the many others who, like the saints Isidore, Gregory of Tours, Avitus, and Cesarius, were familiar to the Saxon

ecclesiastics. Yet even this list is so considerable, that any clergyman, even in our days, who should be acquainted with them, would be no mean theologian, or even scholar. That England was noted for her literary treasures,—for the care with which she caused MSS. to be transcribed—is evident from the same author, who, in the view of regenerating France, caused scribes to be sent into this island for copies of these works. In every royal monastery throughout England, one scribe was employed to chronicle events as they occurred,—a foresight to which we owe the knowledge of our ancient history; and to transcribe the books already written was a part of education. Even the nuns entered the wild field of learning. For the use of the abbess Hildelita\* and her community, Aldhelm wrote his poem *De Laudibus Virginitatis*, which required no mean proficiency in the language to understand; and to the abbess Eadburga†, St. Boniface addressed his Latin epistle relative to the damnation of king Ceolred. These two facts would prove that the knowledge of Latin was no uncommon qualification in the sisterhood; but we have still stronger evidence to prove the fact. The lives of two saints, Willibald and Wunebald, were written by an English nun. The epistles of St. Boniface contain several from English ladies. In some of them we find claims to the classical poets of antiquity; and in one are some verses written by another young nun, who was at that time learning the metrical art from the abbess Eadburga. It is but fair to observe, that the nuns of other countries were, perhaps, equally learned. Thus, St. Radegund, a nun of Poitiers, was, according to the undeniable testimony of Fortunatus, bishop of that see, in the habit of reading, not only the fathers of the church, but the Christian historians and poets‡; nor is her case mentioned as a peculiar one: on the contrary, we infer from the same

\* See Vol. III. p. 217.

† See Vol. II. p. 219.

‡ Ibid. p. 227.

prelate that such reading was a common accomplishment. We have before related\* that St. Cesarius of Arles rendered two hours' daily reading at least obligatory on the nuns. And that Germany in this respect was not behind France, may be inferred from the example of the nun Hrosvitha, whose comedies "in imitation of Terence" are well known to European scholars. In the Anglo-Saxon church, as in every other at that period, theology was the favourite study, the one to which all other knowledge was subordinate; grammar and rhetoric, and even science, were valued only as tending to facilitate or to illustrate this most important pursuit. Yet their writings, especially their letters, contain frequent allusions to the classic writers of Greece and Rome. But their learning was superior alike to their genius and their taste. It is surprising to see how anxious they were to have authority for every thing they uttered, — at least in their treatises of devotion, or their scripture commentaries. For every sentence they had recourse to some father of the church, and their most elaborate works on theology are but short passages, profusely heaped on one another, from the great lights of the church. Of scholastic learning they were wholly ignorant: they had no conception of that bold and vigorous spirit of enquiry which began from the eleventh century to agitate the church universal, — of that philosophical spirit, that logical precision, that subtlety of intellect, which was hereafter to distinguish the theologians of Europe. And their judgment was not superior to their originality. The experience of mankind shows that it is perfectly possible to be conversant with the greatest models of composition, yet to remain barbarous: though some of the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with the most correct writers of antiquity, they could never attain even a tolerable style. Some were simple even to meanness, others turgid and bombastic: these looked merely at the sense, indifferent as to the mode of expression,

\* Vol. II. p. 219.

those regarded expression as every thing. Of this fact we shall have illustrations enough in the following pages. From these general observations we proceed to examine in detail a few of the chief Anglo-Saxon writers, accompanying our strictures with such remarks as may serve to impress the reader with the intellectual character of the times.\*

The Latin historians of the Anglo-Saxon period are so few as scarcely to merit notice ; the Saxon chronicle, which some writers would assure us was a contemporary record of the times, and continued from year to year with as much punctuality as a merchant's ledger, does not appear to have commenced earlier than the close of the tenth, or the beginning of the eleventh century. It is a dry record of events, occasionally interspersed with a few scraps of what should be poetry, but which few in our days will acknowledge to have had any claim to the distinction : it is, however, after all, a venerable monument of antiquity, and valuable, as containing, sterile as its language, more facts and dates than all our ancient authorities together. Our earliest account of England after the Roman domination is from a Briton, — from Gildas, a monk of Bangor, who evidently lived about the middle of the sixth century. It is remarkable that his *Liber Querulus de Excidio Britannico*, which closes with the first ravages of the Saxons, contains none of those romantic incidents which later writers have interwoven into the national history. It is, however, not a safe authority ; its declamation must make us suspicious of its accuracy in all cases except one, — the notorious worthlessness of the native Britons. *Nennius*, abbot of the same monastery about the middle of the ninth century, wrote a history of a different character, since it contains the germs of the fruitful

\* Lingard, *Antiquities*, passim. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglorum*, lib. iv. cap. 1. and 2. ; necnon *Vitæ Abbatum Woremulhensium*, p. 295, &c. Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfridi*. Alcuinus, *de Pontificibus et Sanctis Eboracensis Ecclesie*, v. 1536, &c. *Epistolæ S. Bonifacii*, passim. Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Præfatio ad partem i. sæculi iii.* p. 29. *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, de Regibus*, fol. 12. ; necnon *de Pontificibus*, lib. v. *Aldhelms, de Laudibus Virginitatis* (in *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tom. viii.).

harvest of fable which Geoffrey of Monmouth and subsequent historians of the country have so plentifully reaped. This change in the opinions of the times from the sixth to the ninth century is very striking. In the time of Nennius the Britons were still independent of the Saxons ; they still virtually possessed the whole western region from Cornwall to the Clyde, and they appear still to have indulged the hope, that they should ultimately, if not speedily, regain the whole country. Tradition was at no loss to magnify the ancient glory of the nation. It was manifest, indeed, that the nation must have been conquered, since it was driven successively from its eastern possessions into the barren mountainous districts of the west. To divest this fact of its more mortifying features, and to gratify their patrons, the chieftains and kinglings, the bards, who doubtless existed in Wales, as in England, long before Nennius, were eager to throw the blame on treachery or accident, or even magic ; hence the romance of Rowena, the perfidy of the Saxons, and the other fables which from this time disfigured the sober hue of history. As a sample of the abbot's manner, who evidently followed the songs and traditions of his time, we shall relate one of the fables respecting Vortigern. That prince was weak no doubt, and wicked enough ; but that he married his own daughter and had a son by her ; that the daughter laid the child to the charge of St. Germanus, is sufficiently absurd. What had he done with his Saxon bride, the daughter of Hengist, for whom he had incautiously sacrificed the independence of his country ? When the Saxons were in possession of the southern and western coasts, and too powerful to be expelled, Vortigern, says the abbot, convoked his nobles, and asked them what he should do ? They advised him to build a fortress where he might defy the assaults of the enemy. Accompanied by his *magicians*, he hastened into the west to discover a suitable site for his fortress : none seemed so well adapted as Snowdon, which his

magicians assured him would be impregnable to the end of all time. With extreme diligence he caused workmen to be brought, wood, stones and other materials to be collected; but in the morning, what was his astonishment to see that the materials had vanished! The same prodigy was repeated three times. On demanding what this meant, he was gravely informed that unless he could find a boy unbegotten by father, sacrifice him on the spot, and sprinkle the foundations of the citadel with the blood\*, he might build till Doomsday, but never would he raise a wall an inch high. Such a boy, he thought, was not easily to be found; but as he was assured one existed somewhere in his dominions, he despatched messengers in every direction in search of the prodigy. Having passed from province to province, the messengers one day reached a rural village where some boys were at play. One of the boys being the constant winner, another in anger said to him; "No good will ever happen to thee, thou unbegotten knave!" These words naturally arrested the attention of the royal messengers, who went to the boy's mother, and enquired whether he was really unbegotten; the woman affirmed that he was; that though she had never known man, her womb had risen in the usual way, and the boy came at the usual time. The abbot, however, intimates that the woman very well knew who was the father, but that she would not confess it lest she should be put to death. This requires explanation. There was a law, we are told, among the ancient Britons, if an unmarried woman were once frail, she should be thrown from a precipice, and her paramour beheaded; among the Saxons, that she should be buried alive, and her accomplice hanged over her grave; or she should else turn common prostitute, and be compelled to submit to every one's will; in other words, to be degraded to the

\* This allusion to the blood-stained rites of druidism is a good evidence of antiquity. The traces of that horrible superstition lingered among the people long after the introduction of Christianity.

lowest depths of infamy, and thereby banished from all reputable society. To such a law, allusion is evidently made by Nennius; its existence is positively affirmed by Josceline, the biographer of St. Kentigern\*, who intimates that the saint himself had some such origin as the boy, and that the case was by no means rare. *Audivimus frequenter sumptis transfigiis puellarum pudicitiam expugnatam esse, ipsamque defforatum sui minime nosse.* To escape the penalty of her transgression, the woman, if shrewd, might naturally convert the credulity of the age to her purpose. The boy was taken to the king, and in a convention of the nobles, it was decreed that he should be put to death. "Why am I brought hither?" demanded the youth. "To be killed," was the consoling answer, "that thy blood may sprinkle the foundation, and that the citadel may be built!" "Who has suggested this notable contrivance?" enquired the intended victim of Vortigern. "My magicians." Not satisfied with this authority, the boy asked *them* who had taught them that *his* blood was necessary for the construction of the fortress. No answer. "I will unfold the whole mystery," said the boy. Then turning to the magicians, he asked them what lay under the ground on which they were standing. They could not tell. "There is a pool of water beneath," said he; "dig and see." A pool was found. "What is in the pool?" Still the magicians could not answer. "I know," said the boy; "there are two vases in the pool." The vases were found. "What is there between these vases?" The same silence. "I will tell you; there is a tent between them." The tent was found. "What does the tent contain?" The magicians are silent as before. "Two serpents; the one white, the other red."

\* *Erat in illo populo barbaro, a diebus antiquis, lex promulgata, ut puella quæ in paternis fornicatis gravida inveniebatur, de supercilio montis altissimi precipitaretur, corruptor autem illius capitis plecteretur. Similiter apud antiquos Saxones, pene usque ad moderna tempora sancitum durabat, ut qualibet virgo in paternis sponte defforata, absque ulla retractatione viva sepeliretur, violator vero ipsius supra sepulchrum ejus suspenderetur.* — *Joscelinus Monachus Furnessensis in Vita S. Kentigerni* (apud Pinkerton. *Vitæ SS. Scotia*, p. 201.).



The serpents were found asleep. "Wait!" cried the youth, "and see what they will do when they awake." No sooner were they roused than they furiously assailed each other; and in their successive struggles, though the white dragon had at first the advantage, the red expelled it from the tent; the victor pursued the other beyond the pool, when tent and all vanished. Of course the magicians could make nothing of this mystery; but the boy declared that the two dragons were the two nations; that the white one was the Saxon, the red the British; that the pool was the world; that though the former serpent had the advantage for some time, the native one was ultimately victorious; so, in the present conflicts, the Saxons might temporarily triumph, but the Britons would in the end drive them beyond the sea. The reader has no doubt already divined that this beardless prophet was Merlin.\*

This legend of the abbot Nennius is sufficiently wild: it is, however, much less so than it became in subsequent times, when every mouth and every writer added, as patriotism required, to the original romance. In the hands of Wace, author of the *Roman de Brut*, of our Geoffrey of Monmouth, of Gaiamar, of Layamon, and others, it assumed a more imaginative, and, in fact, a more interesting appearance. On this subject we cannot resist giving a few extracts from the romance of Merlin, which is certainly a legend of the Anglo-Saxon times. It appears to have been translated either from British, or from Norman-French, into English, and the translator is certainly much older than Gower, or any of our vernacular poets. The language had evidently been modernised before Mr. Ellis published the extracts in his *Specimens of Early English Romances*. They will illustrate the progressive character of fable in all ages and countries. That from the ninth to the twelfth century, such additions, such poetical embellishments, should be introduced, need not surprise us: there is no

\* Gildas, de Excidio Britannia, p. 13, &c. Nennius, Historia Britonum, cap. 38—43. p. 108—119. Nicholson, English Historical Library, p. 33.

greater difference between Geoffrey of Monmouth and Nennius, than between Nennius and Gildas. This fact is very instructive: it may enable the judicious investigator into the antiquities of ancient Britain, and of Britain even in the Anglo-Saxon period — antiquities which it is not our present object to consider, and which, if it were, we should omit until we had access to the ancient relics still subsisting in the Welsh language\*, — it may enable such a one to steer his way through the darkest path ever traversed by historian. †

There was once, says the romance in question, in England a rich man, with a loving wife, a dutiful son, and three fair yet chaste daughters. But this happiness was not long to last: the lady was naturally violent in temper; the devil perceived it, and assailed the weak part so skilfully, that she quarrelled with her son, and very seriously wished him in a place that shall be nameless. The devil heard the wish, and, determined to have his own, strangled the unfortunate youth during sleep. The despairing mother hung herself, and the father died of a broken heart, without confession or absolution. Melancholy was the situation of the three orphan sisters; but they were comforted, as much as their case would allow, by a neighbouring hermit, the holy Blaise, who endeavoured, by the imposition of penance, fasting, and prayer, to protect them against the evidently declared enmity of the prince of darkness. But Satan was not to be thus foiled: he prevailed on an old hag to seduce the mind of the eldest. Her wanton discourse had its effect; the young lady sinned, was discovered, and, according to the law we have mentioned, was buried alive. The second sister was next assailed, and with equal success; but, to escape death, she submitted to indiscriminate prostitution. Now for

\* To these relics we hope ere long to have access. Until then we shall not enter into the subject; if we incidentally glance at it, we do so only to illustrate the Anglo-Saxon portion of our task.

† The more curious reader we refer to the history of Geoffrey and the Brut of Wace. The poem of Layaman, with many other valuable MSS., could have been given us by Dr. Grundtvig, but for something which we have no wish to investigate.

the youngest. The terrified young lady flew to the hermitage, acquainted Blaise with the lamentable news, and pathetically besought his aid to escape or to resist the arts of the demon. He not only exhorted her to watch every thought, but to take every possible precaution against the visible assaults of demons who dwelt in the middle air. This notion, that such beings, who were always on the watch to seduce wanton maidens, were often permitted to effect their object, was very prevalent in these islands. To it the monk of Furness, as we have before observed, alludes ; and it is more explicitly avowed by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Vita Merlini*.\* The author of the romance before us remounts to the origin of the thing. He tells us, on the authority of "David the prophet and Moses," that when the angels, who rebelled under Lucifer, were thrust from heaven, and were transferred from angels of light into "fiendes black," not all of them fell into the pit of hell : some rested in the mid air, ever ready to assume any shape, and to employ any temptation, against men. At the conclusion of his sage exhortation to the trembling maiden, the holy Blaise —

“ Bade her heo should nim keep †,  
 That heo ne laid her nought to sleep,  
 And, namely, nought at night  
 But heo hadde candle light,  
 And windows and doors in that stound  
 Weren sperd ‡ by roof and ground.  
 ‘ And make thee again, with good voice,  
 The sign of the holy crois. §  
 Bid || him that he warrant be  
 Again the fiend and his poustie.’ ” ¶

\* Et sibi multoties exaëre corpore sumpti  
 Nobis apparent, et plurima sæpe sequuntur ;  
 Quin etiam coitu mulieres aggrediantur,  
 Et faciunt gravidas, generantes more profano.

In the *Lady of the Lake*, Scott has a personage thus generated

† *Nim leep*, to take care.

‡ Pegged, lashed.

§ Cross.

|| Pray.

¶ Power. Mr. Ellis has evidently taken great liberties with the language. He should have adhered to his MSS.

The maid watched and prayed, and followed the hermit's directions with success for some time; but at length, confiding in her security, she was prevailed on to visit the alehouse with some neighbours, where she remained until a late hour, and got completely drunk. While here, her sister, the prostitute, rushed in, accompanied by a whole troop of harlots, and struck her. She returned the blow, and a battle royal followed. What but ruin could follow the alehouse, drunkenness, and fighting? The maiden staggered home, forgot to say her prayers, went to sleep, and awoke a maid no more. In the morning she hastened disconsolately to the hermit, confessed her sins, and her fear that in her sleep the demon had abused her. What could poor Blaise do, but promise to defend her in future as far as he could? Her inadvertence soon exhibited herself; she was arrested, brought before the magistrate, convicted, and condemned to be buried alive, when the hermit obtained a suspension of her punishment, on the ground that perhaps there was some truth in her protestations of innocence; but, if not, her child had done no wrong, and ought not to suffer with her. She was ordered to the upper apartment of a high tower, to be attended by no one except a midwife: every day they let down a basket for provisions, which were supplied by an officer of justice. In due time a male infant was born — a fine child too, only its covering of black hair from head to foot evinced its origin. Blaise, however, who at that very moment was purposely at the foot of the tower, ordered the infant to be lowered in the basket, hastened with it to the baptismal font, and named it *Merlin*.\* It was then returned to the tower, and taken before the fire. The midwife could not help reproaching it: —

\* In the legend of Robert the Devil, who appears to have been suspiciously engendered, we have a similar incident. We have a remnant of the superstition in our fairies, which, though they do not, like the demons, abuse women, are yet always on the watch to exchange their own ill-formed monsters for new-born children before baptism is administered.

“ ‘ Alas ! ’ she said, ‘ art thou Merlin ?  
 Whether art thou ? and of what kin ?  
 Who was thy father, by night or day,  
 That no man wite ne may.  
 It is a great ruth, thou foul thing  
 That for thy love (by Heaven’s king ! ) \*  
 Thy mother shall be slain with woe.  
 Alas ! that staund it shall fall so !  
 I would thou were far in the sea,  
 With that thy mother might scape free.  
 When that he heard her speak so,  
 He brayed † up his eyen two,  
 And lodly ‡ on her gan look,  
 And his head on her he shook,  
 And gan to cry, with loud din ; —  
 ‘ Thou liest, ’ he said, ‘ old quean !  
 My mother shall no man quell §,  
 For no thing that man may tell,  
 While that I may stand or gon !  
 Maugre hem every one,  
 I shall save her life for this,  
 That thou shalt see and hear, ywis. ’ ”

Great, we may be sure, was the terror of the two women to hear a child, a few minutes old, thus speak : their terror gave way to curiosity, but the child was deaf to their conjurations that he would say who and what he was. The time solicited by the hermit (two years) passed away, and the mother, with the child in her arms, was again produced in the court. Merlin, to the surprise of all present, undertook his mother’s defence, asserted that he was the son of a great demon, but he had the good fortune to be rescued by baptism from the power of his father’s relations ; and, when he saw the judge determined on the execution, he retorted by asking who was *his* father. The enraged functionary replied, “ A noble baron, to be sure ; ” and that his lady mother still lived to prove the fact. “ Let her be sent for,” observed Merlin. When she arrived, Merlin re-

\* Oaths are very common in ladies’ mouths during the middle ages ; they could ride, eat, and swear with any of Fielding’s country squires.

† Raised, opened them suddenly.

‡ Loathingly.

§ Kill.

quested that the examination might be private, for something might chance to transpire not fit for public ears. When alone, —

“ ‘ Merlin,’ he said, ‘ now pray I thee,  
 What was the man that begat me?’  
 ‘ Sir,’ he said, ‘ by St. Simoun!  
 It was the parson of this town,  
 He begat thee, by St. Jame!<sup>†</sup>  
 Upon this woman that is thy dame.’  
 The levedy said, ‘ Thou foul thing!  
 Thou hast lowen a stark lesing.\*  
 His father was a noble baroun,  
 And holden a man of great renown:  
 And thou, a misbegotten wretch,  
 I pray to God the de’el thee fetch!  
 In wild fire thou shouldest be brent,  
 For with wrong thou hast me shent.’<sup>†</sup>”

Merlin, however, was not daunted by this denial: he put her in mind of a certain journey from which her husband the baron returned unexpectedly in the night: —

“ ‘ It was by night, and not by day,  
 The parson in thy bed lay:  
 At thy chamber door thy lord gan knock;  
 And thou diddest on thy smock,  
 And were sore afraid that tide!  
 And undiddest a window wide,  
 And then the parson thou out let,  
 And he run away full shet. †  
 Dame,’ he said, ‘ that ilke § night  
 Was begot thy son the knight. —  
 Dame,’ he said, ‘ lie I ought?’  
 And heo stood still and said nought.”

Of course the lady was self-convicted; she even confessed her sin, and ran to the parson to acquaint him with its disclosure; and the parson, in despair, drowned himself in the river. Merlin’s mother was saved; and,

\* Thou hast lied a great lie.

† Quickly.

‡ Slandered.

§ Very.

some years afterwards, he persuaded her to assume the veil in a Benedictine nunnery. According to the romance, Merlin was seven years old when the messengers of Vortigern found him. His adventures on the way to the court are graphically described. The first night they halted at a market town, the streets of which were filled with buyers and sellers. Having looked at them attentively, he suddenly burst into a loud fit of laughter. What could this mean? He pointed out to them a young man bargaining for a pair of shoes : —

“ Then said Merlin : — ‘ See you nought,  
That young man that has shoon bought,  
And strong leather to do hem clout,  
And grease to smear hem all about?  
He weeneth to live hem to wear :  
But, by my soul, I dare well swear  
His wretched life he shall forlet  
Ere he come to his own gate.’ ”

The second day brought another and more violent fit of laughter, excited by a funeral procession preceded by priests, of whom the leader chanted most melodiously, while on the bier, which supported the corpse of a boy ten years of age, an aged mourner gazed with anguish. The laughter was caused by the fact that the jolly priest was the father. The third day had its laugh, but nothing was visible. On being questioned as to the cause, he related a circumstance then passing at the court of Vortigern. The chamberlain of the king, though in the male garb, was in reality a woman. With her the queen fell in love ; but her advances were naturally repulsed. In her rage she accused the chamberlain to Vortigern as one who had attempted her chastity, and the offender, without any enquiry, was ordered to be executed. Merlin, however, had pity in his half-demon half-human composition ; and he despatched one of the messengers to court, which they were now fast approaching, to examine the sex of the offender. Soon after his arrival at court, Merlin was

taken to Salisbury Plain, the site which the monarch had chosen for his fortress. He told Vortigern that the reason why the stones were every night thrown down was owing to the nocturnal battles of two enormous serpents: they caused an earthquake, and the earthquake caused the ruin of the edifice. The ground was dug, the pool was found, but, instead of jars and a tent, were discovered two large stones or rocks; under one was a white, under the other a red dragon: —

“ With long tailis fele fold  
 And found right as Merlin told.  
 That one dragon was red as fire,  
 With bright eyen, as basin clear;  
 His tail was great and nothing small;  
 His body was a round withal.  
 His shaft may no man tell;  
 He looked as a fiend of hell.  
 The white dragon lay him by, —  
 Stern of look and griesly.  
 His mouth and throat yawned wide;  
 The fire brast out on ilka side.  
 His tail was ragged as a fiend;  
 And upon his tail’s end,  
 There was shaped a griesly head.  
 To fight with the dragon red.”

When the dragons began to fight, the sight was so fearful that all ran away except Merlin, who clapped his hands to encourage them: —

“ The red dragon and the white  
 Hard together gan they smite,  
 With mouth, paw, and with tail;  
 Between hem was full hard batail;  
 That the earth dinned tho,  
 And loathly weather was thereto.  
 So strong fire they casten anon,  
 That the plains thereof shone,  
 And sparkled about, so bright  
 As doth the fire from thunder light.  
 So they fought for, sooth to say,  
 All the long summer’s day.



They ne stinted never of fighting,  
 Till the even song gan ring.  
 So, in that time, as I you tell,  
 The red dragon, that was so fell,  
 Drove the white far adown  
 Into the plains, a great viroun \*,  
 Till they came to a valley ;  
 There they rested hem both tway,  
 Well the mountaunce † of a while  
 That a man might gon a mile ;  
 And there the white cover'd ‡ his flight  
 And wax eager for to fight.  
 And eagerly, without fail,  
 The red dragon he gan assail ;  
 And drove the red light again  
 Until he came into the plain.  
 And there the white anon light,  
 Hent § the red with all his might,  
 And to the ground he him cast,  
 And, with the fire of his blast,  
 Altogether brent the red,  
 That never of him was founden shred ;  
 But dust upon the ground he lay."

Merlin forgave the Magi in that they had thirsted for his blood ; they had been deceived by the stars, which his wicked father had placed in certain signs that his life might be spared. But the interpretation given of the serpents by the author of the romance does not quite agree with that in Nefnius : the red dragon was Vortigern himself ; the white one represented Uther and Aurelius, the two rightful heirs to the crown, who, in time, would dethrone and slay him. ||

The venerable Bede is the only *native* (Saxon) historian in Latin during the period under consideration. From him we have given extracts sufficiently copious to convey an accurate impression of his manner. There are, indeed, several biographical writers ; but with the exception of Asser, from whom we have the first forty

\* Circuit, from the old French verb *vincer*, to turn.

† Amount.

‡ Recovered.

§ Seized.

|| Romance of Merlin, part i., in "Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances," by Ellis, vol. i.

years of king Alfred's life, all are hagiologic. Of these Eddius, the biographer of St. Wilfrid, is the most important, from the light he casts on the history of the Saxon kingdoms.—As, of the celebrated names we have yet to mention, most distinguish themselves in various branches of composition, we will now forsake the classification of subjects, and consider each Latin writer in the order of time. By this means we shall avoid the necessity of perpetually reverting to the same individual.

The first of the Anglo-Saxon monks who obtained 639  
much celebrity by his writings was *St. Aldhelm*. He to  
was a West Saxon of noble family, and born in the 709.  
first half of the seventh century. His early education was confided to the care of Adrian, the abbot of St. Augustine at Canterbury, who, like his friend St. Theodore, has everlasting claims on the gratitude of Englishmen. He afterwards assumed the habit in the monastery of Meldun, since corrupted into Malmesbury, the recent foundation of Maildulf, a Scottish monk, a celebrated teacher, and, if William of Malmesbury is to be believed, a philosopher. The ability of Maildulf, however, was probably inferior to that of Adrian; for Aldhelm soon returned to the monastic school at Canterbury. That his acquirements, notwithstanding his delicate health, which compelled him to relinquish, or rather to suspend his studies, were of a superior order, may be inferred from the praises of the venerable Bede. He is said to have been *vir undecunq̄ue doctissimus, sermone nitidus, eruditione mirandus*. He was the first Englishman who composed Latin verse according to known rules.\* But his literary studies were necessarily subordinate to his religious obligations. He built several churches and monasteries, and relieved the monks of Malmesbury from penury, — a lot which had been theirs from the very foundation of the house. Being elected to the government of that community, —

\* Yet his errors in quantity are very frequent, — a charge, however, applicable to all the Latin poets of the middle ages.

a dignity which he filled as early as 675, — he made literature no less than discipline flourish ; and the numerous benefactions made to it by the great, both nobles and kings, prove the estimation in which he was held by his contemporaries. If we are to believe his biographer, the celebrated William of Malmesbury, his sanctity even during life was attested by several miracles. It is gratifying to find, so early as the twelfth century, that such pretended manifestations of Heaven were beginning to fall into disrepute. They could no longer be confidently related as things which must be implicitly believed. William thinks it necessary to vindicate his own reasons for relating them. They had, he said, been handed down from one generation to another, and ought not, he thought, to be esteemed as nothing. “ If any one should object to me that I write what I have heard, not what I have seen, let him also condemn the most celebrated fathers, St. Luke in the gospel, St. Gregory in his dialogues.” That William — unlike the knave Osbern — believed the miracles he collected, there can be no doubt ; but his very anxiety on this subject proves that a more rational spirit was beginning to be stirred in England. Such a spirit had appeared long before in some parts of the Continent. The more aged monks of several monasteries had received with coldness the intelligence of miraculous manifestations, even when they, as a community, must of necessity profit by them. They contended that tranquillity, seclusion, prayer, solitary labour, were the first obligations of a monk ; but how could these obligations be fulfilled, if crowds of people were permitted daily to visit the shrine of a sainted inmate ? The abbot St. Trudo went farther, and boldly declared that miracles were useful to infidels only ; that for those who already believed they were not required, and consequently not vouchsafed. William of Malmesbury, however, though he knew he should have many incredulous readers, proceeds to record them ; but we shall not imitate his example : on this head we have already

given specimens enough.\* He is said to have been a great admirer of chastity; to have passed his life unspotted. † This was no slight merit in one in whom the propensity appears to have been troublesome. Not even rigid fasting and vigils were sufficient to cool the tempter without a plunge into a neighbouring lake, a specific of which we have often read, and which we humbly recommend to the monastic bodies present and to come. Pope Sergius I., however, whom he visited for the purpose of obtaining the apostolic privileges for his new monasteries, is said to have been deficient in the same resolution. While the Englishman was at Rome, a nun bore a child, and the pope was declared to be the father. Great was the fury of the Romans on hearing such a report of their bishop, whom they declared worthy of death. This was a serious affair, and it hurt nobody more than St. Aldhelm. He endeavoured to assuage the popular fermentation by asking what distant people would thenceforward honour the pope, or value his authority at all, if the Romans themselves despised him? This appeal, however, had no effect; but, says his biographer, he ordered the infant, then only nine days old, to be brought before him and the people, and he solemnly adjured it to say whether Sergius was the father or not. Of course the child declared that the pope was unspotted,—that he had never known woman. Were there any truth in this anecdote, we should unhesitatingly place Aldhelm among that goodly multitude of knaves, who, during the middle ages, assumed the religious habit to further their own views: but it may be safely rejected: we find it, for the first time, in a writer near five centuries after his time. Nor do we think that

\* One, however, is too poetical to be lost; it is related, not by William of Malmesbury, but by an anonymous biographer, of a doubtful age. Having celebrated mass in the Lateran church at Rome, he hung his cassock, which he always carried with him, on a sunbeam. *Ita firmiter et constanter solis radio pependit, ac si alicujus solidæ materiei sustentaretur adminiculi* (apud Bolland. Maii xxv).

† This we might reasonably doubt, if, as his two biographers assert, he sometimes lay with a maiden, to show, like the early Christians, that he could bear the lion in his den. The self-imputed trial may safely be rejected.

Sergius I. was guilty of the crime laid to his charge. He appears to have been confounded with a real monster of iniquity, Sergius III., paramour of the infamous Marozia \*, and, in all probability, as Baronius and Pagi admit, father of John XII. In 705, Aldhelm was nominated to the new bishopric of Sherburn. In this new capacity he doubtless exhibited the virtues which peculiarly adorn it, — unimpeachable morals, firmness in correcting the clergy, diligence in watching over the wants of his flock, activity in all his other duties, charity towards the poor. He was equally distinguished for the zeal with which he multiplied religious foundations and procured their endowment. But on his consecration he was advanced in years: in fact, he was approaching the end of his career; and the English church was not long edified by his virtues. He died in 709, in the same year as another celebrated prelate, St. Wilfrid, whom he equalled in acquired knowledge, but to whom he is undoubtedly inferior in vigour of intellect.†

In reading the extant works of St. Aldhelm, we are

\* "It is said that he was consecrated at Rome by pope Sergius I., and that he had the courage to reprove the holy father for having a bastard." *Biographia Brit.*, art. *Aldhelm*. The learned editors of that blundering, often malicious as blundering, collection, quote Godwin † and Bale ‡, their usual, almost, their only, authorities for their ecclesiastical lives. In the sentence just quoted, every third word is an inaccuracy. When Aldhelm was consecrated, Sergius I. had been dead four years: as to his *reproof* of that pontiff, we have seen what *it* is. The dunces followed Godwin, as great a blunderer as themselves; but they are careful to give the equally foolish and more malignant charge of Bale (de *Scriptoribus Britannicis*, cent. i. no. 82): — *Unum hoc in eo defendendum occurrit, quod cum Sergio Primo Pontifice Romano longam consuetudinem habens (cujus interim non ignorabat incestum) cauterio perustam avehebat conscientiam.*

We can assure the reader that such monstrous errors, perhaps they deserve a harsher name, are so far from being uncommon in our biographical collections, that throughout them all there is scarcely a life, previous to very modern times, faithfully given. The *Biographia Britannica* contains much fewer than the compilations of our Enfields, our Aikins, and our Chalmerses, yet we can prove that even it has more thousands than it has volumes. Such facts are exceedingly disgraceful to the public press of this country.

† *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, Vita S. Aldhelmi* (apud Bollandistas, *Acta Sanctorum*, die Maii xxv., et plenius apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii., et apud Gale, *quindecim Scriptores*, iii. p. 529, &c.) Anonymus, *Vita ejusdem* (apud Bollandistas, ubi supra). Mabillon, *Acta SS.* Ord. S. Ben., *Sæculum iii.* pars i. p. 222. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, a. d. 699. Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Ang. Sax.*, an. 689, 705, 709.

‡ Without Pagi, Baronius is of very little use. Where England especially concerned, he is often wrong, both as to facts and dates.

surprised at the exaggerated praise of all who mention them, from Bede to Wharton. His style has the worst vices of the period ; it is turgid, laboured, complicated, obscure, affected, abounding with puerile images, sacrificing every thing to art, and wholly regardless of nature. It seems, indeed, as if the sole object he considered worth his notice were *words*. The same bombastic amplification disfigures his prose no less than his poetry, his epistles no less than his more deliberate productions. The book which he addressed to Alfred of Northumbria on the dignity of the Number 7, on the rules of prosody, on poetical metres, and on the nature of metaphors ; and that which he wrote on the Paschal controversy, little deserve our attention. Of his greatest prose work — that in praise of virginity, — the most notice has been taken, both by English and foreign scholars. It contains in a still higher degree his worst defects : under his laboured, gorgeous, yet often puerile language, his thoughts are sometimes completely hidden. Still it is wonderfully imaginative, though in his hands fancy is a power which runs to waste : the very frequency of his figures destroys their effect ; their profusion renders them nauseous to the organs of true taste. His epithets are beyond all conception extravagant : —

“ The golden semblances of the virtues ; the white jewels of merit ; the purple flowers of modesty ; the transparent eyeballs of virginal bashfulness ; the sour grapes of iniquity ; the swan-coloured hoariness of age ; the shrubbery of pride ; the torrid courtesy of the dogmas ; the phlebotomy of the Divine word ; the folding doors of dumb taciturnity ; the helmet of grammar ; the dragon of gluttony ; the plenteous plantations of apple trees fecundating the mind with flourishing leaf ; the shining lamps of chastity burning with the oil of modesty ; the fetid sink of impurity, lamentably overwhelming the ships of the soul,” —

are metaphors which Mr. Turner has collected in a very few pages of his prose works. A better idea, however, of his ordinary style may be formed from his letter to

the monks of St. Wilfrid, who, after the disgrace of that celebrated man, were sufficiently disposed to follow the stream, even to enrol themselves among the enemies of their fallen benefactor: —

“Lately, as you have learned by experience, the furious agitation of the tempest, like a vast earthquake, has shaken the foundations of the church! Like the thunder clap, which vibrates far and wide, that tempest has been heard through different regions of the earth.” — “What cause, I ask, however sad and atrocious, can separate you from your bishop; who has affectionately led you, by nourishing your minds, by instructing and chastising you, from the first opening of the rudiments, from the prime infancy of your tender age, to the full-blown flower of maturity; who, like a careful nurse clasping her beloved within the extended bounds of her arms, has embraced you in the cherishing fold of his love. Contemplate, I beseech you, the order of created things, and the nature divinely implanted in them, so that, from a comparison of the least, you may, with Christ’s help, receive the flexible form of pity. Consider how the bees, by divine instinct swarming, when their leader forsakes the wintry mansions, eagerly issue from their nectar-breathing cells; how the hosts of the numerous caverns, a few excepted, which remain to defend and people their former seats, wing, in one dense mass, their rapid flight towards the sky: if, wonderful to relate, when they thus emerge from their winter camp, and seek the hallowed oak, their king, surrounded by dense legions of his subjects, should be impeded in his passage by the flying dust, or his tiny wings bedewed by the suddenly descending rains from the cataracts of high Olympus, and should return to the grateful hive, the seat just forsaken; quickly will all the host, passing through the wonted porch, eagerly regain the interior of their former cells.” — “If these creatures, of reason destitute, and without written laws which govern their lives, by nature’s instinct obey, as the changing seasons roll, their leader’s command; tell me, I ask, whether with horrid infamy they may not be branded, who, endowed with the Spirit’s sevenfold grace, madly bite the reins of devout submission.”

The reader may easily imagine that such a style of remonstrance was more likely to provoke the merriment than the pity of the monks, who not only suffered their abbot to depart alone, but evidently rejoiced at his departure. It proves, however, that, with all his puerile

pedantry, Aldhelm had a portion of right feeling. The following is in the same taste; our author is evidently fond of bees: —

“ Resembling the industry of the most sagacious bees, which, when the dewy dawn appears, and the beams of the most limpid sun arise, pour the thick armies of their dancing crowds from the temple over the open fields. Now lying in the honey-bearing love-folds of the marigold, or in the purple flowers of the fenny herb, they suck in the juicy nectar, drop by drop, with their eager beaks; now sporting round the yellow willows, and the blushing broom, they bear their plunder on their numerous thighs and distended legs, and with it construct their waxen cells; now humming round the ivy berries, and the light sprigs of the flourishing linden tree, they construct the multiform machine of their honey combs with angular and open cells, the artificial structure of which the excellent poet, with natural eloquence, has sung in catalectic verse; in like manner, unless I am deceived, your memorizing ingenuity of mind wanders through the luxuriant fields of letters, and runs with a bibulous curiosity.”

The earnestness with which St. Aldhelm inculcated what he considered the noblest of the virtues, chastity, is a favourite theme with his biographers. Nor did he inculcate it merely in his two treatises, the one prose the other verse, professedly written on that subject: in several other parts of his works he reverts to it. Thus in his letter to one of his disciples, who, according to a prevailing custom of the times, was about to visit Ireland for the sake of study — doubtless of more tranquil study, than, in the agitated state of the Saxon kingdoms, could be expected in this island — he gives that disciple some curious though not unnatural cautions against the danger of reading pagan books. We give the peculiarly characteristic letter in his own words; in fact, he is one of the authors whom it is almost impossible to translate without destroying his manner: —

“ Domino venerabiliter diligendo et delectabiliter venerando Wilfrido, Aldhelmus vernaculus supplex in Christo perhennem salutem. Perlatum est mihi, rintugerulis referentibus, de



vestræ caritatis industriâ ; quod transmarinum iter gubernante Domino capere, sagacitate legendi succensâ, decreverit. Et iccirco vitâ, comite optatum Hiberniæ portum tenens, sacrosancta potissimum præsigmina, refutatis philosophorum commentitiis, legito. Absurdum enim arbitrator, sprêtâ rudis ac veteris instrumenti inextricabili normâ, per lubrica dumosi ruris diverticula, immo per dyscolos philosophorum anfractus, iter carpere. Seu certe opertis vitreorum fontium limpidis laticibus, palustres pontias lutulentasque limphas siticulose portare ; in quæ atra bufonum turma catervatim scatet, atque garrulitas ranarum crepitans coaxat. Quidnam, rogitans quæso, orthodoxæ fidei sacramento commodi affert circa temeratum spurcæ Proserpinæ incestum, quod abhorret fari, enucleate legendo scrutandoque sudescere ; aut Hermionem petulantem Menelai et Helenæ sobolem, quæ ut prisca produnt opuscula, despondebatur pridem jure dotis Oresti, demumque sententiâ mutatâ Neoptolemo nupsit ; lectionis præconio venerari : aut Lupercorum bacchantium antistites ritu lætantium Priapo parasitorum, heroico stilo historiæ carraxare ; quæ altato quondam sceptri in vertice chelidro Hebrææ concionis obtutibus præsentato, hoc est, almâ mortis morte stipite patibuli affixâ, solo tenus diruta evanuerunt ? Porro tuum discipulatum ceu cernuus arcuatis poplitibus flexisque suffraginibus, faculentâ famâ compulsus, posco ; ut nequaquam prostibula lupanarium, nugas in quæ pompulentæ prostitutæ delitescunt, lenocinante luxu adeas, quæ obrizo rutilante periscelidis armillaque lacertorum tereti utpote faleris falerati curules comuntur ; sed magis edito aulæ fastigio spreto, quo patricii ac prætores potiuntur, gurgitii humili receptaculo contenta tua fraternitas feliciter fruatur ; nec non contra gelida brumarum flabra e climate olim septentrionali emergentia neglecto, ut docet Christi disciplina, fucato ostro, potius lacernæ gracilis amictu ac mastrucæ tegmine incompto utatur.”

By this time the reader will have discovered that if the nuns, for whom St. Aldhelm chiefly wrote, and to whom he addressed his treatise in praise of virginity, really understood him, they must have made greater proficiency in the language than many scholars of the present day. “ They are marked,” says an admirable judge, “ by a pompous obscurity of language, an affectation of Grecian phraseology, and an unmeaning length of period which perplexes and disgusts.” Of his prose works we will not attempt to give an analysis. The

matter is worth nothing; the style and the manner soon displease; indeed, on this head we shall not add to the extracts we have already made; but proceed to his poetry, which has better claims on our attention.\*

The poems of St. Aldhelm are *De Laude Virginum*, *De Octo Principalibus Vitiis*, and *Enigmata*. The first, which is also the best, contains a preface to the abbess *Maxima*, which, for elaborate puerility, has no equal in the whole range of Latin composition, — not even in the anonymous *De Consolatione Rationis*, to which, on a former occasion, we directed the reader's attention.† It is an acrostic both in the initial and the final letters of each line; and what is still more singular, not only are the initials and the finals the same, though read inversely, but each line begins and ends with the successive letters of the first line. It is too extraordinary to be omitted.

*“ Prefatio ad Maximam Abbatissam.*

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |        |        |        |        |   |   |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
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| R | e | g | n | a | t | o | r | u | m | u | n | d | i | ,<br>r | e      | g      | n      | a | n | s      | i | n | s | e | d | i | b | u | s | a | l | t | i |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| I | n | d | i | g | n | o | c | o | n | f | e | r | e | m      | i      | h      | i      | d | i | g      | n | e | t | u | r | i | n | a | e | t | h | e | r |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
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| I | n | t | e | r | s | a | n | c | t | o | r | u | m | c      | u      | n      | e      | o | s | ,<br>q | u | i | l | a | u | d | e | p | e | r | e | n | n |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| R | i | t | e | g | l | o | r | i | f | i | c | a | n | t      | o      | r      | u      | m | m | o      | d | e | r | a | n | t | e | m | r | e | g | n | a | t | o | n | a | n | t |  |
| O | m | n | i | p | o | t | e | n | s | D | o | m | i | n      | u      | s      | ,<br>m | u | n | d      | i | f | o | r | m | a | t | o | r | e | t | a | u | c | t | o |   |   |   |  |
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| S | e | d | m | a | g | i | s | e | x | i | g | u | o | s      | d      | e      | f      | e | n | d      | e | n | s | d | e | x | t | e | r | a | t | a | n | g | a |   |   |   |   |  |
| N | e | p | r | a | e | d | o | c | e | l | l | o | r | u      | m      | c      | l      | a | u | d      | e | r | e | l | i | m | e |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| V | e | l | s | a | n | c | t | o | s | v | a | l | e | a      | t      | n      | o      | x | a | r      | u | m | f | a | l | l | e | r | e | s | c | e | n |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| N | e | f | u | r | s | t | r | o | p | h | o | s | u | s      | f      | o      | v      | e | a | m      | d | e | t | r | u | d | e | t | i | n | a | t | r | a |   |   |   |   |   |  |

\* S. Aldelmus, *De Laude Virginitatis* (in *Bibliotheca Magna Patrum*, tom. viii.). *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, Vita ejusdem Sancti* (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii.). *Turner, Anglo-Saxons*, iii. p. 404. *Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Sacrés et Ecclésiastiques*, tom. xvii. p. 753. *Lingard, Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 343.

† *History of Spain and Portugal*, vol. iv. p. 211–213.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| C | onditor a summo quos Christus servat Olymp   | O |
| P | astor ovile tuens ne possit rabula raptō     | R |
| R | egales vastans caulās vis dicere pup pu      | P |
| O | mnia sed custos defendat ovilia jam nun      | C |
| M | AXIMA, præcipuum quæ gestas Numine nome      | N |
| A | ddere præsidium mater dignare precat         | U |
| N | am tu perpetuum promsisti lumine lume        | N |
| T | itan quem clamant sacro spiramine vate       | S |
| C | ujus per mundum jubar alto splendet ab arc   | E |
| A | tque polos pariter replet vibramine fulme    | N |
| R | ex regum et Princeps populorum dictus ab aer | O |
| M | agnus de magno, de rerum regmine Recto       | R |
| I | llum nec terræ, nec possunt cingere cœl      | I |
| N | ec mare navigerum spumoso gurgite valla      | T |
| A | ut zonæ mundi, quæ stipent æthera cels       | A |
| C | larorum vitam, qui castis moribus isti       | C |
| A | uxiliante Deo vernabant flore perenn         | I |
| S | anctis aggrediar, studiis edicere paupe      | R |
| T | anta tamen digne si pauper præmia proda      | T |
| O | mnia cum nullis verbis explanet apert        | E |
| S | OTSAC ANIMRAC TNAMORP CNUNSEORIT ACIRTE      | M |

It is wonderful how the fanciful author was able to infuse into these idle verses what little sense they contain. Was nobody at hand to whisper into his ear, that for every idle moment he must hereafter give a rigid account?\*

From this precious beginning little would be expected, even from a poem containing as many verses as three books of the *Eneid*. Yet the very invocation, the first twenty-two lines, are calculated to cheer us with hope.†

\* Præfatio in *Laude Virginum* (apud Canisium, *Thesaurus Monumentorum*, tom. i. p. 713.).

† The lines above are Mr. Turner's version, which is literal, and on the whole very expressive; we sometimes make a slight correction in foot notes. The original may here be given: —

“ Omnipotens genitor, mundum ditione gubernans,  
 Lucida stelligeri qui condis culmina cœli,  
 Nec non telluris formanos fundamina verbo:  
 Pallido purpureo pingis qui flores virecta:  
 Sic quoque fluctivagi refrenas cœrula ponti.  
 Mergere ne valeant terrarum littora limphis,  
 Sed timidos frangunt fluctus obstacula rupis:  
 Arvorum gelido qui cultus fonte rigabis,  
 Et segetum glumas nimboris imbribus auges:  
 Qui latebras mundi geminato sidere demis;  
 Nempe diem Titan et noctem Cynthia comit:

' Almighty Father, Sovereign of the World !  
 Whose word the lucid summits of the sky  
 With stars adorn'd, and earth's foundations framed ;  
 Who tinged with purple flowers the lonely heath ;  
 And check'd the wandering billows of the main,  
 Lest o'er the lands the foamy waves should rage  
 (Hence rocks abrupt the swelling surge control) :  
 Thou cheer'st the cultured fields with gelid streams,  
 And with thy dropping clouds the corn distends :  
 Thine orbs of light dispel night's dreary shade ;  
 Titan the day, and Cynthia tends the night.  
 From thee what tribes the fields of ocean roam,  
 What scaly hosts in the blue whirlpools play !  
 The limpid air with fluttering crowds abounds,  
 Whose prattling beaks their joyful carols pour,  
 And hail Thee as the Universal Lord.  
 Give, merciful, thine aid, that I may learn  
 'To sing the glorious actions of thy saints !

I seek not rustic \* verse, nor court the Nine,  
 Nor from Castalia's nymphs their metres ask,  
 Said erst to guard the Heliconian hill ;  
 Nor, Phœbus, need I thy loquacious tongue †,  
 Whom fair Latona bore on Delos isle :  
 I'll rather press the Thunderer with my prayers,  
 Who gave to man the lessons of his word.  
 Words from the WORD I ask, whom David sang ;

Piscibus æquoreos qui campos pinguis ornas,  
 Squamigeras formans in glauco gurgite turmas :  
 Limpida præpetibus sic complex acra catervis,  
 Garrula quæ rostris resonantes cantice pipant :  
 Atque Creatorem diversa voce fatentur.  
 Da prius auxilium, clemens, ut carmina possim  
 Inclita sanctorum modulari gesta priorum.

Non rogo ruricolæ versus, et commata musas ;  
 Non peto Castalidas metrorum cantica nymphas  
 Quas dicunt Helicæna jugum servare supernum ;  
 Nec precor, ut Phœbus linguam sermone loquacem  
 Dedat, quem Delo peperit Latona creatrix :  
 Sed potius nitar precibus pulsare Tonantem,  
 Qui nobis placidi confert oracula verbi.  
 Verbum de Verbo peto, hoc psalmista canebat,  
 Corde Patris genitum, quod proles unica constat,  
 Quo Pater Omnipotens per mundum cuncta creavit.  
 Sic Patris et Proles dignetur Spiritus almus,  
 Auxilium fragili clementer dedere servo."

\* *Ruricalas musas*, means the *pastoral muse*.

† *Linguam sermone loquacem* ; which should have been rendered thy *fluent or eloquent tongue*.

Sole offspring of the Father, and by whom  
 The Almighty Sire created all we know :  
 So may their gracious inspiration deign  
 To aid their feeble servant in his lay !”

Next follow, in praise of virginity, verses which are of too ascetic a character for us. To illustrate his subject, the author proceeds to enumerate and to extol such as, whether in the Old or New Testament, whether in civil or ecclesiastical history, were most conspicuous for this virtue. In his list of worthies he does not much attend to method ; he takes the names as they strike his memory, and some he mentions which may probably cause surprise to the reader. There is *Elias*, who might be bachelor, widower, or married, for any thing we, who are no poets, know : and *Enoch*, of whom as little in this respect is known ; but, as he “ walked with God,” he was of necessity, in the catholic opinion, *virgineo flore flagrans.*” Of these, as of the following, Aldhelm gives us a biographical sketch sufficient to prove an extensive reading both in the Scriptures and the fathers. After *Enoch* comes *Elisha*, who is nearly as doubtful ; and after *Elisha* *Jeremiah*, who, as divinely favoured with the foreknowledge of our Saviour’s life, could not fail to be “ a virgin,”\* *Daniel* was the same †, or how could he have been so favoured by the revelations of the Highest ? — revelations never made to man in wedlock, unless they abstain *ab usu matrimonii* : then indeed they are acknowledged to have as much merit as virgins. Our poet now descends to apostles, fathers, and early saints, from St. John the Baptist downwards, of whom all were of necessity chaste. Having dismissed the men, the author proceeds to enumerate the women, from St. Mary downwards, who were conspicuous for this virtue. He has here a wide field, even though he confines himself to the more ancient church, and he scours it manfully ; and though in his hurry he omits

\* “ Hunc pia virginitas ornebat flore pudoris.”

† “ Quod Daniel semper virgo floresceret alnus.”

many whom we should consider more illustrative of his subject, we ought rather to be surprised at what he has done, than at what he has left undone. Hear his praise of virginity\* : —

“ Now let my verses cull the rarest flowers,  
And weave the virgin crowns which grace the good ;  
What can more charm celestials in our conflict,  
Than the pure breast by modest virtue ruled ?

\* Also from Mr. Turner. Here follows the original : —

“ Nunc igitur raras decerpent carmina flores  
Et quis virgineas valeant fabricare coronas.  
Quid plus cœlicolas juvat in certamine nostro  
Quam integritatis amor regnans in pectore puro ?

“ Virginitas castum servans sine crimine carmen  
Cætera virtutum vincit præconia laude :  
Spiritus alithroni templum sibi vindicet almus.

“ Virginitas fulget lucens, ut gemma coronæ  
Quæ caput æterni præcingit stemmate Regis.  
Hæc calcat pedibus spurcæ consortia vitæ ;  
Funditus extirpans petulantis gaudia carnis.  
Auri materiem fulvi, obrizumque metallum,  
Ex quibus ornatur præsentis machina mundi,  
Glarea de gremio prodidit sordida terræ :  
Sic casta integritas, auri flaventis imago,  
Gignitur e spurcâ terreni carne parentis.  
Ut rosa puniceo tincturas murice cunctas  
Coccineosque simul præcellit rubra colores ;  
Pallida purpureas ut gignit glarea gemmas,  
Pulverulenta tegit quas spurci glebula ruris ;  
Ut flos flavescens scandit de cortice corni,  
Tempore vernali dum promit germina tellus ;  
Sic sacra Virginitas, cœlorum grata colonis,  
Corpore de spurco sumit primordia vitæ.

“ Vineæ frugiferis ut constat gloria campis,  
Pampinus immensus dum gignit palmite botros,  
Vinitor exspoliat frondentes falceibus antes ;  
Sidera præclaro cedunt ut lumina soli,  
Lustrat dum terras obliquo tramite Titan,  
Cuncta supernorum convincens astra polorum :  
Sic quoque Virginitas quæ sanctos indita comit,  
Omnia sanctorum transcendans præmia supplex,  
Integritas quoque virtutum regina vocatur.

“ Integritas animæ regnans in corpore casto  
Flos est virgineus, qui nescit damna senectæ.  
Nec cadit in terram ceu fronde ligustra fatiscunt.  
Cernite fecundis ut vernent lilia sulcis,  
Et rosa sanguineo per dumos flore rubescat.  
Ex quibus ornatus qui vincit forte palæstris,  
Accipit in circo victor certamine sarta :  
Haud secus Integritas, devicta carne rebeli,  
Pulchras gestabit Christo regnante coronas.”

The chaste, who blameless keep unsullied fame,  
 Transcend all other worth, all other praise :  
 The Spirit high-enthroned has made their hearts  
 His sacred temple.

“ For Chastity is radiant as the gems  
 Which deck the crown of our Eternal King :  
 It tramples on the joys of vicious life,  
 And from the heart uproots the wish impure.  
 The yellow metal which adorns the world  
 Springs from the miry chambers of the earth :  
 So the pure soul, its image, takes its birth  
 From carnal passions' of terrestrial love.  
 And as the rose excels the Tyrian dyes,  
 And all the gaudy colours work'd by art ;  
 As the pale earth the lucid gem creates  
 In rustic soils beneath the dusty globe ;  
 As yellow flowers shoot gaily from the corn,  
 When Spring revives the germinating earth :  
 So sacred Chastity, the dear delight  
 Of all the colonies of Heaven, is born  
 From the foul appetites of worldly life !

“ And as the vine, whose spreading branches, bent  
 With stores immense, the dresser's knife despoils,  
 Exists the glory of the fruitful fields ;  
 And as the stars confess the all-glorious ray,  
 When, in his paths oblique, the sun rolls round,  
 Transcending all the orbs which grace the poles :  
 So Chastity, companion of the bless'd,  
 Excelling, meekly, every saintly worth,  
 Is hail'd the queen of all the virtues here.

“ The Chastity which rules the virtuous frame,  
 A virgin flower which blooms unhurt in age,  
 Falls not to earth, nor sheds its changing leaves.  
 Behold the lilies waving in the fields,  
 The crimson rose, sweet blushing on the bank,  
 Which crowns the conquering wrestler, and becomes  
 The garland for the victor in the course :  
 So Purity, subduing rebel nature,  
 Wins the fair diadem which Christ awards.” \*

\* S. Aldelmus, *De Laude Virginum*, passim. Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 364, &c.

We have alluded to the biographical sketches, or rather the verified legends of some saints. We give two specimens followed by our own versions; we thereby hope to gratify both the learned and the English reader.

*St. Ambrose.*

“ Jam fuit Hesperia famosus laude sacerdos  
 Ambrosius, Christi complens præcepta benigni  
 Spiritus, et castæ servavit fœdera carnis,  
 Qui nomen gerit Ambrosiæ de nectare ductum.  
 Hic tener in cunis quondam dum parvulus esset,  
 Magna futurarum gessit spectacula rerum :  
 Namque examen apum numerosis forte catervis  
 Contextit faciem pueri, mirabile fatu ;  
 Quæ licet horrenda stiparent labia cohorte,  
 Non tamen infantis sensit discrimina corpus.  
 Sic crebris vicibus replebant ora jacentis,  
 Atque catervatim rursum remeari studebant.  
 Post hæc ætherias repetentes agmina nimbos,  
 Visibus humanis certant abscedere porro.  
 Hæc pater Ambrosii stupuit miracula cernens,  
 A quo sortitur nomen sic inclyta proles :  
 Hoc nempe examen quo sancti labra redundant,  
 Dulcia mulsorum portendit verba favorum,  
 E quibus affatim dulcescunt pectora plebis.”

Which we may thus English :

Witain Hesperia's bounds, well known to fame,  
 A priest once lived, and Ambrose was his name ;  
 On his obedience Christ, his master, smiled ;  
 Pure was his soul, his body undefiled.  
 Thus rightly was he named ; for, nectar-fill'd,  
 His rosy lips the grateful dew distill'd.  
 Their destined use, while in the cradle laid,  
 To faithful eyes was wond'rously display'd ;  
 For, on the infant's face, oh, sad alarm !  
 The murmuring bees in eager clusters swarm.  
 Yet, though around its dewy mouth they press'd,  
 Nor sting nor murmur broke its tranquil rest.  
 And thus they sipp'd, till, laden well their thighs,  
 The swarm mellifluous hasten'd to the skies.



These heavenly signs the father's wonder claim,  
 He bids *Ambrosius* be the infant's name.  
 Prophetic was the scene, by God design'd :  
 Those nectar'd lips round which the myriads twined,  
 To shed the sweetly flowing words were given,  
 To fill with hallow'd souls the courts of Heaven.\*

*St. Thecla.*

“ *Virgo dicata Deo florebat tempore prisco,  
 Nomine hanc Theclam veteres dixere parentes,  
 Quæ conversa fuit sacrato dogmate Pauli,  
 Et Christum sequitur, connubia pacta relinquens.  
 Virginitatis amor flagrans in corde puellæ  
 Dulcia mundanæ sprevit consortia vitæ,  
 In qua fundavit cœlestis gratia mentem,  
 Secula quam penitus nunquam mollire valebant.  
 Durior ut ferro foret ad tormenta cruenta,  
 Hanc pater et genitrix, pactis sponsalibus, ambo  
 Ad stirpem generis satagebant dedere nuptis.  
 Sed mens virgencis ardescens torrida flammis,  
 Gurgite mundano perfusa tepescere nescit.  
 Quamvis verborum rorarent imbre parente ;  
 Sicut nimborum stillabant athera guttis.  
 Propterea focus, et flagrans accenditur ignis,  
 Vulcanus late fervebat torribus atris,  
 Ut virgo felix ferret tormenta rogorum,  
 Consumptura piam falso sine crinine carnem.  
 Tali femineam sontes molimine spinam  
 Excruciare student, membratim quatenus ossa,  
 Si fieri posset, vacuarent cruda medullis.  
 Sed Deus æterna defendit ab arce puellam,  
 Ut voti compos flammam evaderet ignis.  
 Traditur ad rictus virgo lacerando leonem,  
 Diris vero dant muliebres morsibus artus.  
 Bestia sed sacrum non audet carpere corpus,  
 Defendante Deo devotæ membra puellæ.  
 Dum teneræ carni non usquam sponte pepercit.  
 Sic Sator electis, cum mundi scammate certant,  
 Aurea cœlestis largitur præmia regni.  
 Hæc suprema suæ decoravit tempore vitæ,  
 Purpureo sanctam perfundens sanguine carnem,  
 Martyr perpetui dum scandit lumina cœli.”*

\* S. Aldelmus, *De Laude Virginum*, p. 725. (apud Canisium, *Thesaurus Monumentorum*, tom. i.). We have nothing to do with the false quantities of this holy poet.

In our present translation we will avoid the shackles of rhyme : —

In ancient times, to goodness consecrate,  
 A virgin flourish'd ; by our sires of yore  
 Saint Thecla named : she, by apostles urged,  
 The saving doctrines of the cross received,  
 And for her God the couch of Hymen spurn'd.  
 For deep within, intensely glow'd the flame  
 Of holy chastity, which from the dross  
 Of earthly passion purged her virgin heart.  
 Her mind, by grace divinely fortified,  
 With constancy each worldly lure withstood.  
 Sharper than steel the anguish she endured,  
 When, spousal rites prepared, with eager voice  
 Her parents urged her to the nuptial bed.  
 But, wrapt in fires of heavenly sanctity,  
 In vain did those of human love assail ;  
 Vain, too, the wordy shower her parents pour'd,  
 To dim the brightness of the air she breathed.  
 At length, to torments doom'd, this blessed saint  
 Beholds the raging fire, by demons fannd,  
 The marrow of her spotless limbs to melt.  
 By wicked hands dragg'd to the blazing pile,  
 Thine arts, infernal cruelty, she spies.  
 But from his seat the Everlasting looks,  
 And bids the roaring of the furnace cease,  
 That through it scatheless may the virgin pass.  
 Next, to the lion's wide and hungry jaws,  
 With fiendish joy her maiden limbs are cast ;  
 These holy limbs, by God's supreme command,  
 Though longing to devour, the monsters spare.  
 Thus oft to his elect, with vice at war,  
 Does God the foretaste of his kingdom grant.  
 Meet, in its final close, this virgin's life :  
 Her spotless limbs with purple streams adorn'd,  
 To heaven's eternal bliss the martyr flies.\*

We shall give another specimen of St. Aldhelm's poetical powers, in describing the might of Christianity over paganism.\*

\* S Aldelmus, De Laude Virginum (apud Canisium, Thesaurus Monumentorum, tom. i. p. 747.).

† We subjoin the original.

“ Non Mars vulnificus qui belli semina spargit,  
 Raucida Gorgoneis inspirans corda venenis  
 Delubri status potuit succurrere parmis :

" Not Mars, the lord of wounds, who scatters round  
 The seeds of war, and fills the rancorous heart  
 With Gorgon poisons, can assist his fanes ;  
 Nor Venus can avail, nor her vile boy ;  
 The golden statues of Minerva fall,  
 Though fools proclaim her goddess of the arts ;  
 Nor he for whom, as ancient fictions sing,  
 The leafy vines their precious branches spread,  
 Can prop the columns nodding with their god :  
 The marbles tremble with terrific crash,  
 And the vast fabric rushes into dust.  
 E'en Neptune, surnamed sovereign of the waves,  
 Who, by his swelling billows, rules the main,  
 He cannot save his sculptured effigies,  
 Whose marble brows the golden leaves surround ;  
 Not e'en Alcides, who the centaurs crush'd,  
 And dared the fiery breath of prowling Cacus,  
 When from his throat his words in flame were pour'd,  
 Though his right hand the dreadful club may grasp,  
 Can shield his temples when the Christian prays." \*

We need not notice the treatise *De Octo Principalibus Vitiis*, which is inferior to the present ; nor the *Enigmata*, of which we have already seen a precious specimen in the dedication to the abbess Maxima.

From the preceding extracts it will be perceived, that, whatever might be the puerile taste or the weak judgment of St. Aldhelm, he was far from destitute of

Nec Venus, aut Veneris præsunt spurcissima proles :  
 Aurea sternuntur fundo simulachra Minervæ  
 Quamque deam stolidi dicerunt arte potentem :  
 Nec Bacchus valuit, cui frondent palmite vites,  
 Ut referunt falso veterum figmenta librorum,  
 Numine nutantes fani fulcere columnas :  
 Sed titubant templi tremebundis marmora crustis,  
 Et ruit in præceps tessellis fabrica fractis.  
 Neptunus fama dictus regnator æquorum,  
 Qui regit imperium ponti turgentibus undis,  
 Falsas effigies, quas glauco marmore sculpunt,  
 Aurea ceu fulva quas ornant petala fronte,  
 Haud valuit veterum tunc sustentare deorum.  
 Alcides fertur Centauri victor opimus,  
 Flammea qui pressit latronis flamma Caci.  
 Quamvis fumosis ructaret flabra loquelis,  
 Herculis in crypta sed torquet dextera clavam,  
 Nec tamen in templo rigida virtute resultat,  
 Quæ famulus Christi supplex oramina fudit."

\* This time we adopt Mr. Turner's versified translation.

imagination. That quality, indeed, he possessed in a higher degree than any other Anglo-Saxon poet who wrote in the Latin tongue. In him it is too exuberant: he wastes it on the most trivial topics; and, when he touches on subjects which really require it, he ceases to surprise us: his stock of images and of metaphors has been nearly exhausted; nor are those which he now produces at all superior to such as he had already expended on minor things. Take him, however, for all in all, we know not that any European country, in the seventh century, can furnish his equal as a poet.\*

We now come to the *Venerable Bede*, the glory of <sup>673</sup> the English nation. It is remarkable that, while the <sup>to</sup> Anglo-Saxon monks carefully detailed the most trivial <sup>735.</sup> circumstances in the lives of other ecclesiastics, the knowledge of which we could well have spared, not one of them has given us a life of the greatest literary benefactor this or any other nation ever possessed. For this neglect it is impossible to account. That he was held in the highest estimation, both by his contemporaries and by posterior times, is evident from the earnestness with which the Saxon bishops engaged him to write an ecclesiastical history of England; from the praises of his countryman, St. Boniface †, who calls him “sagacissimus investigator Scripturarum, candelā in domo Dei;” from the similar testimony of St. Lully ‡; from the epistles of his own disciple, the monk Cuthbert, who was present at his death, and who emphatically says, that the whole English nation should return thanks unto God for the gift of so admirable a man §; from the eagerness with which application was made to the two monasteries of Jarrow and Weremouth for copies of his works; from the praises of Alcuin ||; from the fact that the royal Alfred translated the whole of his

\* S. Adelmus, De Laude Virginum. Turner, Anglo-Saxons, iii. 368.

† See Vol. II. p. 195.

‡ Ibid. p. 201.

§ “Et rectum quidem mihi videtur, ut tota gens Anglorum, in omnibus provinciis ubicunque reperti sunt, gratias Deo referant, quia tam mirabilem virum illis in sua natione donavit.”—*Epist. S. Bonif.* p. 124.

|| See Vol. II. p. 247.

ecclesiastical history; and that the second council of Aix-la-Chapelle, about a century after his death, calls him the venerable and admirable doctor; and from the estimation in which he has always been held, as a doctor of the church universal. We repeat, the meagre notices of ancient writers respecting him are inexplicable. The information we have, we are compelled to gather from his own incidental expressions, in various parts of his works; from the epistle of Cuthbert; and from Turgot, prior of Durham, who, about the year 1100, made some collections inserted in the history of that church by Simeon. He was born in 673, in the territory belonging to the monasteries of St. Peter and St. Paul (Wearmouth and Jarrow), at a village between the Wear and the Tyne. This event, however, took place before the foundation of either monastery.\* The banks of the Tyne, not those of the Wear, had the honour of his education. He was, when in his seventh year, entrusted to the care of the abbot Benedict Biscop, and to Ceolfrid, who may be called the prior of Benedict, during the frequent visits made by that abbot to the continent, and who, after Benedict's death, succeeded to the government of the two establishments. They may, however, be termed one; for not only were they subject to the same abbot, but the indissoluble union and affection of the inmates made them, in the strictest sense of the word, one community.† The diligence with which the young Bede applied to study, appears from his own account in the last chapter of his history: — “Passing the whole of my life in this monastery ‡, I devoted all my powers and all my time to the meditation of the Holy Scriptures, to the observance of the regular discipline, to the daily task of chanting in

\* Wearmouth was founded in 674, Jarrow in 684.

† The words of Bede are expressive: — “Monasterium Beati Pauli Apostoli (Wearmouth) construxit, ea duntaxat ratione, ut una utriusque loci pax et concordia, eadem perpetua familiaritas conservaretur et gratia.” — *Instil. Abbatum Weremouth et Gyrwen*, p. 296.

‡ This does not necessarily imply that his whole time was passed at Jarrow, as he considered both monasteries one, and calls them one, he was probably often at Wearmouth.

the church. To learn, to teach, and to write, have always been my sweetest enjoyment." Of his success we have evidence enough in his works. In his nineteenth year he was admitted to deacon's orders: the canonical age was twenty-five; but dispensations even at this period were common; nor, whatever may be thought by modern writers, was any peculiar favour shown to him in this case. At thirty, he received full orders, and thereby added to the number and weight of his duties. How, amidst those demanded by his monastic, sacerdotal, and magisterial character (we use the word *magisterial* in its scholastic sense), he found time to write so much,—on subjects, too, which imply a reading absolutely immense,—may well surprise us. He was, we may easily infer, a most indefatigable student. From his ordination to his fifty-ninth year—the time when he completed his Ecclesiastical History,—he was, as he himself informs us, occupied in extracting from the fathers of the church such notes on the Holy Scriptures as were likely to prove useful to himself and others; not forgetting to intimate that he added something of his own, both as regarded the sense and the manner of the interpretation. He might have added that he also embraced the whole range of human knowledge. He died in 735.\* That his end corresponded with his pure and useful life, is sufficiently proved by the relation of his disciple Cuthbert, who, as we have before observed, was present at that scene.

“He was attacked with great difficulty of breathing, yet without pain, about two weeks before Easter. Yet afterwards he was joyful and merry, giving thanks unto God day and night, nay hourly, until Ascension day arrived. Daily did he give lessons to us his disciples, and the residue of each day he passed in the singing of psalms. The whole night, except when a little slumber intervened, he watched, always joyful,

\* Both Mabillon and the Bollandists have made the life of Bede shorter than it was, from an erroneous calculation as to the year of his birth. Some MSS. of Siméon's history have indeed 677, but from his own words it is manifest that in 731, when he finished his Ecclesiastical History, he was 59. (Hist. Eccles. lib. v. cap. 24.)

always praising God. If sleep for a moment overtook him, he did not fail, on rousing, to resume his wonted devotions, and with outstretched hands to utter his gratitude to heaven. O blessed man! Often did he repeat that saying of the apostle Paul, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!* and many other passages of Scripture, all fitted to rouse us from the sleep of our minds, and to impress us with our last end. And some things also he spoke in our own, the English language, for he was well versed in our songs: and putting his thoughts into English verse he feelingly said: *For so necessary a journey, no man can be too prudent; none can reflect too much on the good or evil he has done; none can be too solicitous about the judgment which after his death his spirit must receive.* According to our custom and his he sang the Antiphonies, of which one is, *O king of glory, Lord of virtues, who on this day didst triumphantly ascend to heaven, leave us not orphans, but send us the promise of the Father the Spirit of Truth! Alleluja!* And when he came to the words, *leave us not orphans,* he burst into tears and wept much, and seeing this we wept with him. Again we read, again we wept; indeed we always wept. In such godly employment we passed the quinquagesimal days until the day before mentioned (Ascension), he rejoicing and thanking God that he was thus afflicted. For he often repeated: *God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth!* with many other passages from Scripture. And he repeated the saying of St. Ambrose, *Non sic viri ut me pudeat inter vos vivere; sed nec mori timeo, quia bonum Dominum habemus.* And during this time he was occupied not only in teaching us, but on two works which well deserve to be remembered: the first was the Gospel of St. John, which he had translated into English for the benefit of the church, as far as that passage, *but what are they among so many?*\* the other consisted of extracts from the books of bishop Isidore. 'I do not wish my disciples to read lies, that after my death they should labour in vain.' On the arrival of the third feria before the Ascension, his breathing became more painful, and a little swelling appeared in his feet. Yet, for all that, he taught and dictated with cheerfulness, sometimes observing, 'Learn quickly; for I know not how long I may live; how soon my Maker may call me!' To us it seemed as if he well knew his approaching end. The next night he passed watching and giving thanks. And on the morning, which was the fourth feria, he told us diligently to continue what we had begun. And this being done, we walked, as the custom of the day required, until the third hour, with the relics of the saints. But one of us remained with

\* Chap. vi. ver. 9.

him, and said to him, 'Dear Master, one little chapter yet remains: will it not pain you to be asked any more questions?'—'No! take thy pen, prepare it, and write quickly!' And this he did. And at the ninth hour the master said unto me, 'I have some precious things in my little chest, some pepper, orarias\*, and incense; run quickly and bring the presbyters of our monastery, and I will distribute among them what God has given to me. The rich men of this world delight to make presents of gold, silver, and other precious things: I also with much affection and joy will give to my brethren the gifts which I have received from Heaven.' And he addressed every one by name, beseeching and admonishing them to say masses and to pray for him, which they willingly promised. And they all mourned and wept, when he said that they should see his face no more in this world; but they rejoiced in that he said, 'The time is come when I must return to Him who created me out of nothing! Long have I lived; well my merciful Judge foresaw the tenour of my life. The time of my departure is at hand; I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' These and many other words he spoke with much cheerfulness. And when it drew towards evening the youth before mentioned said, 'Dear Master, one sentence yet remains!'—'Write it quickly!' was the reply. Immediately afterwards the youth observed, 'It is now finished.' He rejoined, 'Well and truly hast thou spoke; it is finished! Now take my head in thine hands, and turn me towards the holy place where I was wont to pray, that sitting I may call on my Father!' Wherefore, being laid on the floor of the cell, he chaunted *Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto!* And no sooner had he repeated the concluding words *Spiritui Sancto*, than his soul winged its flight to the celestial kingdom. All who witnessed the death of this blessed father, said that they had never seen any other man end life with such devotion and tranquillity." †

The works ascribed to this great and good man fill eight folio volumes; and the variety of their subjects corresponds with the extent. He wrote, we are told, on

\* *Oraria*. Orarium, ab orâ pro extremitate vestium derivatur; limbis qui apponitur orâ, causâ ornatûs. Again, Orarium, sudorium quo os abstergitur.—*Ducange*, ad verb.

† Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. v. cap. 24. *Epistola Cuthberti* (apud *Simconem Dunelmensem*, *Historia de Ecclesia Dunelm.* lib. i. cap. 15.; vide cap. 8. 14. ejusdem libri). *Bollandistæ*, *Acta Sanctorum*, *Die Mail* xxvii. *Mabillon*, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben. Sæculum iii. pars i. p. 534.* &c. *Vide Sex Epistolas S. Bonifacii, necnon Beati Alcuini, et Concilium iii. Aquisgranense, Præfatio ad lib. iii.*



almost every thing, — on grammar, arithmetic, music, astronomy, the computation of time, on the art of metres, on Scriptural tropes and figures, on the history of his country, the lives of some saints, a martyrology, many hymns, sermons, homilies, and comments on the Scriptures, and several epistles on subjects of more than ordinary interest. By far the most extensive portion of his labours consists of theology. He commented on almost every book of Christ, from Genesis to Revelations. An analysis of the whole would require more volumes than this compendium; we can do no more than briefly advert to the general character of a few. (Of his *science* we shall speak hereafter.)—On his ecclesiastical history, from which we have made copious extracts, we have sufficiently dwelt; and his lives of saints and abbots we have for the most part substantially given. These relate to his character as an historian, which is well understood. That his works, even of this class, especially his church history, are invaluable, is admitted by all: they are written in a plain unaffected style; in the best possible spirit; and they are surprisingly accurate as to facts. In reality, but for him the history of the Saxon kingdoms would be no less dark than that of Hungary or Scandinavia during the same period. In this respect we have the advantage over every other European nation; not one is so well acquainted with its early history as his works have made us. While the contemporary writings of other nations consist merely of dry, abrupt, lifeless facts and dates, — generally one line to a year, — *his* are so minute as often to contain a graphic description of manners. For this advantage we are indebted, not only to his attention, which was habitually minute, but to the industry with which he collected information for his chief undertaking. From the papal library at Rome, no less than from the Saxon ecclesiastics in every kingdom of the heptarchy, he received valuable communications. On his credulity, we have before remarked. It was the error of his age. One thing is certain, — that though he relates miracles on

the faith of others, he nowhere confirms them by his own authority.\*

Of the treatises contained in the collection of his works, some are certainly not his; and there are others doubtful. At the close of his ecclesiastical history he himself gives us a catalogue of those which he had composed down to the completion of that work; and such as are not contained in it must be regarded with suspicion, unless internal evidence lead us to infer their paternity. That from 731 to 735 he was busily occupied there can be no doubt; but had he lived four times that period, he could not, if we take into the account his numerous monastic, sacerdotal, and didactic duties, have composed all that is attributed to him. On the other hand, there were some written by him which are not contained in any edition of his works; of these the greater portion is probably lost; but that a diligent search might discover a few may be inferred from the success of Martene, who, in his *Collectio Anecdotorum*, published the Commentary on Habakkuk. Some, again, have appeared in Simeon of Durham and other writers. Into the interminable controversy as to which are and which are not his, we cannot enter: we will restrict our notice to such as are incontestibly the productions of his mind. Of these the most considerable are his scriptural comments. They exhibit, in general, a plain good sense, always an extensive reading; his language is exceedingly simple, evidently because he aimed at edification, not at applause. The world, indeed, in which he moved, was too narrow to leave room for the exercise of the ordinary incentives to ambition. Confined to an obscure corner of Northumbria, which, during his whole life, he appears never to have left, except on one visit to York, he could command no other applause than that of the simple monks, or the still simpler pupils, by whom he was surrounded. He under-

\* Ceillier, *Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques*, tom. xviii. p. 1, &c. Southey, *Vindiciæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, art. *Bede*.

took his theological works, which constitute three fourths of all attributed to him, in the pure spirit of duty. He felt the responsibility under which he lay of imparting to others the knowledge which he had received : he was not merely a monk and a priest, but an authorised teacher, whose chief obligation it was to educate youth for the ministry of the altar. Hence his extensive reading of the Fathers ; hence the unwearied diligence with which he laboured to diffuse a knowledge of the Scriptures ; hence his devotional temperament, which governed the minutest actions of his life. That he aimed only at utility is plain from the whole tenour of his writings. In fact, so submitted was his judgment, his very thoughts, to the authority of the church, that he refrained from the agitation of questions which might lead him into dangerous ground. Yet that such questions often presented themselves to his mind, is certain from innumerable passages of his commentaries. The following extract from his exposition of the first chapter of Genesis will better illustrate his manner than a thousand general remarks : —

“ *And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, &c.* In creating other things, God said, *fiat* ; let it be : hence, *faciamus hominem*, let us make man, implies a plurality of persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; yet that this plurality subsists in the perfect unity of the divine nature is evident from the verse immediately succeeding, *So God created man in his own IMAGE : in his own image*, not as a father in the image of the son, nor the son in that of father : he did not say, in *our* image, but in the image of God. Now when it is said that man was created in the image of God, the words must have reference to the *inward* man, the seat of his reason and understanding ; they allude, not to his body, but that power, derived from God, by which he has dominion over all other animals. In this case, the scripture does not say, as at the conclusion of the creation of the preceding things, *and it was so* ; but it says, *so God created man* ; clearly implying the intellectual nature of the new creature, — the implication having reference also to light, which was first created.” — “ Some have suspected that the creation in this case refers *only* to the *inward* man ; because in the following chapter it is said, *and the Lord God formed man out of the dust*

of the ground, — words which in their opinion imply the subsequent creation of the *body*; nor did they understand how the distinction of the sexes — *male and female created He them* — could exist otherwise than as a *bodily* distinction. In what sense man, who before his fall was immortal — received for food, in common with other animals, every herb and fruit tree bearing seed, is difficult to be explained. For the words *increase and multiply*, though it might be supposed that the command could not be fulfilled without the actual junction of the man and woman, yet it is possible that in immortal bodies there might be some other mode of generation, that children might be born through some peculiar operation of a pious intellectual love; neither they nor their parents being subject to death, until the whole earth were filled with immortal men. As to food, however, nobody will venture to say that it would be required by any other than *mortal* bodies.” — “*And God saw every thing that he had made, and beheld that it was very good.* Here a natural question arises, — whether God, foreseeing as he did that man would sin, not separately, but with all his kind, called him good in reference to the future.\* Singly, each thing as created was called *good*; *every thing*, the aggregate, *very good*: the body and each of its members, is fair, even when separately beheld; each is much fairer, when viewed as forming part of the same body. Others enquire in what respects our interior man possesses the *image and likeness* of God. According to Origen, that image and that likeness consist in two things, — in man's immortality, and in his moral goodness: according to Faustinus, the resemblance of our inward man with God is sixfold — it is immoveable, rapid, invisible, incorporeal, subtle, immortal. *So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he HIM; male and female created he THEM.* This passage proves that the soul both of the man and of the woman was created; consequently, that these heretics are mistaken who deny this. As to the fact that Adam was not created until the sixth day, until all other things were formed, was it fitting that he *should* be made until his house was ready for him?”

In the preceding extract there is a strange union of simplicity and acuteness, with a considerable admixture of good sense. But after Bede has given us what he considers the natural, he proceeds to the *spiritual* meaning of the words. In this he is exceedingly fanciful, often puerile, sometimes absolutely ridiculous.

\* Bede does not pursue this subject.

We must, however, remember that both for what is good and what is vicious in his writings, he is indebted to the Fathers of the first four centuries, whom, in substance, he always follows, however he may deviate as to the manner. Who, unacquainted with the spirit of the age, which in scriptural exposition was essentially allegoric, would believe that the following puerilities are from the same sober pen, — that they form the immediate continuation of the above comment? —

“In a spiritual sense we are to understand by the earth the church; by the beasts of the earth the Jewish people; by the reptiles, the Gentiles; by the fishes, the heretics and philosophers of the world, who are under the dominion of man, that is, of Christ. But, in a good sense, the fish may also mean good teachers, and the fowls of the air may design the saints, who are under the dominion of Christ and his church.”

In the same strain he proceeds to tell us, that *male* and *female* mean the *church* and the *obedient*, because the woman is obedient to the man: that *increase* and *multiply* refer to the progressive acquirement of spiritual knowledge, gifts, and graces; that *male* and *female* may also mean *the spirit*, and the *soul* or *life*, since *spiritus* is of the masculine gender, and *anima* of the feminine.\*

The HOMILIES of Bede are chiefly founded on the gospel of the day. They are not expositions of a simple passage, but of several passages, sometimes of a whole chapter, but there is always a unity of subject, because the verses on which he dwells form so many links of the same chain. In the proper sense of the word, however, they are not expositions; they are rather such reflections on any given subject as a sober but often a mystic piety would suggest, accompanied by such exhortations as zeal for the salvation of others would naturally dictate: —

\* Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, tom. xviii. Smith's *Judicium de Scriptis Bedæ*, p. 808. (in vitâ ejusdem). Bedæ Venerabilis, *Expositio in Genesim*, cap. i. (in *Operibus*, tom. iv. p. 24.).

"John chap. ii. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, &c.*

"That our Lord and Saviour, when invited to a marriage, not only accepted the invitation, but for the entertainment of the guests condescended to perform a miracle when there, — without reference to the sacramental consecration,— confirms even in its literal sense the faith of true believers. Hence this circumstance implies the condemnation of Tatian, Marcian, and others, who heretically preached against marriage. For if there were any thing evil in the bed undefiled, in nuptials celebrated with becoming chastity, in no wise would our Lord have been present, in no wise would he have consecrated the rites by the first fruits of his miracles."

"*And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine: Jesus saith to her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.* In no wise did he who commands us to honour father and mother, intend to dishonour his mother: still less did he mean to deny that she was his mother, from whose virgin womb he had condescended to be born, being made, as the Apostle saith, *of the seed of David according to the flesh*; and how could he be of that seed according to the flesh, except from the body of Mary, who sprang from David? But in that he was about to perform a miracle, he said, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* signifying that he had not received the origin of that divine nature which he was proceeding to exhibit from his temporal mother, but that he had enjoyed it eternally with the Father. What, O woman, is there in common between my deity, which I have always held indissolubly with the Father, and the human nature which I have received from thee? *The hour is not yet come* when by dying I may show the prevailing nature of the humanity which I have received from thee: I must previously exhibit the power of the eternal Deity in great signs. *And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. The hydriæ* (water pots) are vases made for the receiving of water; for in Greek water is called *ὕδωρ*. Hence the water signifies the knowledge of holy Scripture, which cleanses its readers and hearers from the pollution of sin, and becomes the fountain of divine knowledge. The six vases in which the water was contained are the holy bodies of the saints." \*

This allegorising spirit of Bede is the greatest blemish in his works. He spiritualises every thing; he can

\* Bede, *Homiliæ Hyemales de Tempore* (Opera, tom. vii. p. 204.).

perceive celestial analogies in the commonest things of life. We should give him credit for much of what he does not possess, — fancy, — did we not know that some of the earliest fathers of the church indulged in the same dreaming spirit, and that he only followed them. When he confines himself to an explicit interpretation of his text, he is often very judicious.

! “John xvi. 23, &c. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask in my name he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full, &c.*

“Weak hearers might stumble at the words at the head of this day’s Gospel, in which the Saviour says unto his disciples, *Whatsoever ye ask in my name, it shall be given unto you*, when we certainly know, not only that many of our petitions to the Father in Christ’s name are *not* granted, but that the apostle Paul himself, though he three times asked the Lord that the messenger of Satan by whom he was beset might depart from him, could not obtain what he sought. But this stumbling-block is removed by the ancient interpretation of the fathers— that they only can be said to ask in Christ’s name, who ask those things which relate to eternal salvation; and, therefore, that the apostle Paul did not ask in the Saviour’s name, when he besought that he might be released from that temptation to which the preservation of his humility rendered it necessary he should be subject, and without which he could not be saved, since he himself admits, *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me*. Whenever, therefore, our prayers are not heard, the reason is that we ask for something contrary to our welfare, and are mercifully denied by the Father, as was the case with the apostle, who received for answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness*; or that, if we ask for the things really useful to our salvation, our sins close the ears of the righteous judge, and we fall under the sentence of Solomon, *He that turneth away his son from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination*; or that, while asking in a proper manner, and, as we may believe at the time, in a spirit deserving to be heard, that we may be enabled to repent of certain sins, yet such is their obstinacy that we cannot obtain what we ask. Sometimes too it happens, that though we petition for proper things in a proper spirit, we do not *immediately* obtain what we solicit, the granting of which is

reserved to a future time. Thus, when on bended knees we daily pray the Father, *Thy kingdom come!* though that kingdom does not come at the conclusion of the prayer, at a fit time it will come. And this delay is an especial grace of our Maker, that by it our love of devotion may be increased, and that the increase being daily greater and greater, we may at length receive the full joys we solicit."

"*Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* The proper order of these words is, *Ask that your joy may be full, and ye shall receive.* Now, this fulness of joy is our eternal beatitude. Omitting the joy of sinners, by which they purchase eternal misery, the saints have joy even here, notwithstanding their earthly affliction, in the hope of happiness hereafter; they have joy in the fellowship of others; they learn to rejoice with those that rejoice, to weep with those that weep. But this is not the fulness of joy, which is alloyed by tears: the fulness of joy is that where there is no weeping, where we are enjoined only one part of the command — rejoice with those that rejoice.

*Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,*— as if he should say, ask not for those frail worldly joys, which are always mixed with sorrow, and the end of which is sure to be so; but pray for that joy, the plenitude of which is not diminished by the approach of anxiety, and the eternity of which is circumscribed by no bounds of duration. If you persevere in thus asking, beyond doubt you shall receive what you ask. Concerning the fulness of faith, St. Peter thus writes:— *Yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.* Wherefore seek this fulness of joy; seek not by words merely the entrance to your celestial country, but strive by good works to procure its inheritance: for of little avail are the best prayers towards the securing of that inheritance: if we do not also forsake our evil lives, we shall surely perish."\*

It is impossible to peruse these and similar passages, without being struck with the sober piety of the author. He has no bursts of zeal; no inspirations of eloquence; he is every where calm, but earnest; he appeals not to the heart, but to the understanding. To that fire which touches the conscience, he is a stranger; he has not the burning words of St. Columbanus, nor the forcible illustrations, the argumentative powers of St. Cesarius;

\* Bede, *Homiliæ Æstivales de Tempore* (Opera, tom. vii. p. 20.).



but to neither is he inferior in his anxiety for the salvation of men ; and he is superior to both in learning, as well \*as in a judicious conception of his subject. Among his works, however, strange things may be found, — things so different from his usual manner, that we may wonder how any editor could be so blind as to insert them. Thus, among the “ *Sermones Varii*,” we have the following : —

“ Our merciful God exhorts us by the mouth of the prophet to sorrow of heart and repentance ; saying, *Turn unto me with your whole hearts, with fasting, and weeping, and lamentation ; for I will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live. Again, Delay not to turn unto the Lord, neither linger from day to day ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Why delay thy coming unto the Lord, at the peril of thy soul, for death does not delay ; and if it surprise thee in thy delay, torments must be thy portion.*” — “ Do not men suddenly die ? If to forsake thy sins, and to turn thyself unto God, be good, why not do so quickly ? God has promised remission of sins, not length of life ; wherefore let every one quickly repent : let the wicked man now forsake his evil way.” — “ If thou wouldst not perish, return unto God and thou shalt live. Despair not of pardon, or that thy life will be protracted to allow of repentance. Repent ! Perhaps thou wilt say, ‘ I will repent *to-morrow*.’ ‘ Why not *to-day* ?’ Thou mayest answer, ‘ What harm if I say *to-morrow* ?’ I say, ‘ What harm in repenting *to-day* ?’ Perhaps thou wilt say, ‘ A long life is before me.’ I reply, ‘ If that life be long, let it be a good life ; and if short, let it be good. Thou dost not wish to have a long dinner and a bad one ; thou wishest to have a long life and a bad one. Thou wantest a good house, and thou buyest one ; thou wishest for a good wife, and thou enquirest for one ; thou wishest, too, that good children should be born unto thee ; thou purchasest good garments ; and yet thou wouldst lead a wicked life. *To-morrow* ! What has told thee that thou shalt live until to-

From internal evidence no reader can hesitate to say that these rambling, unconnected, declamatory sentences are not from the judicious, disciplined pen of Bede ; they bear just as much resemblance to his compositions as the wild oratory of a Methodist preacher to the calm

argumentative discourse of a learned English dignitary. In fact, this and near a hundred other homilies were composed by ecclesiastics of a posterior date, some of them most miserable theologians : many could not possibly have been written before the tenth century, since they contain allusions to the circumstances of that period. When that rare phenomenon, a judicious editor, arrives, this celebrated man will not be held responsible for the declamations of ignorant ecclesiastics who belaboured from the pulpit things which, in a dark age, might have their effect, but which have long been banished from all places except the conventicle of the Saturday cobbler and the Sunday theologian.\*

The *doctrine* of Bede is, in general, strictly accordant with that of the ancient fathers, whom he so scrupulously follows. That St. Augustine was his favourite, may be inferred from the fact that he often uses the words, always adopts the sentiments of that renowned doctor of the church.—1. Thus, that his notions concerning *grace* are precisely those of the African bishop, is clear from his comment on that passage of St. John's gospel, *Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.* † How, he asks, does the Father draw men unto Him? By spreading a holy joy in the heart which he teaches ; \*working by love and not by necessity ; for no man believes through compulsion, but through the will. Again, on the words, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, neither can you unless ye abide in me,* he observes, “ We have here a great proof of the necessity of grace, which enlightens the heart of the humble, and shuts the mouth of the proud. No good thing, whether great or little, can you do of yourselves, nothing without Him on whom you depend ; for though the branch will bear fruit when pruned and dressed by the husbandman, yet not the slightest will it yield unless it

\* Bede, *Sermones Varii*, tom. vii. p. 363. Ceillier, *Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques*, tom. xviii. p. 18.

† Chap. vi. 45.

remain in the vine, unless it draw nourishment from the common root." His notions of *faith* are in the same spirit. "The faith which worketh by the love of God is his gift; for the power of believing, of loving, and of good works, depends on no merits of our own, but is derived from the grace of Him who says, *Ye have not chosen me, but, I have chosen you.* It is by his grace, too, that through this faith, this love, and these words we receive eternal life; for that we may not wander from the right path, we have perpetual need of His guidance to whom the psalmist prays, *Lead me in thy will, and I will rejoice in thy truth*: as if he had said, without thy guidance I cannot persevere in the path on which by thy grace I have entered. And, lest we should fail in our good works, we need continually the aid of Him who says, *Without me ye can do nothing.* Well, therefore, does the psalmist, when he would inform us that the very commencement of faith and good works is the gift of God, observe, *My God, thy mercy shall prevent me.* And that we may know that it is God himself who enables us to work righteousness, the psalmist adds, *And thy mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* And to prove further that the reward assigned to our good works, eternal life, is likewise of grace, he says, *Who crowneth thee in his mercy.* Verily, he does crown us in his mercy, when, to our good works, which He himself has enabled us to perform, he grants for a reward the life everlasting." "We offer to God the first fruits of our substance when we refer to his grace all the good which we do; when we confess, from the depths of our hearts, that even the beginning of every good thought, of every good action, comes from him alone; and that every evil thing is from ourselves, through the instigation of the devil. The Pelagians do not offer these first fruits to God, which they reserve to themselves, for they believe, with equal blindness and presumption, that they can do any good thing without his grace."—Language more orthodox, more consistent with the true spirit of Christianity, none, we

may add, more rational, could have been uttered by St. Augustine himself.—2. But few of our readers will subscribe to the same conformity of his opinions with Scripture, or with reason, when he writes on the Eucharist,—“ Every day does Christ wash us from our sins, when the memory of his blessed passion is renewed at the altar, — when the substance of the bread and the wine, through the ineffable sanctification of the Holy Ghost, is changed into the sacrament of His body and blood; so that, while his body is no longer pierced, and his blood no longer shed by the hands of unbelievers, to their utter destruction, both are received in the mouth of the faithful to their salvation.” In other passages he speaks of that “ great and terrible sacrament;” and earnest are the directions which he gives for the purification of the conscience and of the heart before any one should dare to approach “ the holy mysteries.” Whether this doctrine be or be not conformable with that of the apostolic church, is no concern of ours: as historians, we simply record the fact that it was that of Bede, as we have elsewhere shown that it was universally that of the Anglo-Saxon church.\*—3. Of his belief in the efficacy of prayers for the dead, we have seen proof enough in the concluding moments of his life †; and in one of his homilies he expressly declares his opinion that men guilty of venial crimes “ post mortem severe castigandi excipiuntur flammis ignis Purgatori;” and that they must be punished until the judgment day, unless “ amicorum fidelium precibus, eleemosynis, jejuniis, fletibus, hostiæ salutaris oblationibus, absoluti pœnis.”—4. And he permits images to be placed in churches for quickening the devotion of the faithful, — as memorials of the saints, martyrs, and confessors, who through God’s grace have triumphed over sin. That relics, too, were used in the monastery where he breathed his last, we have before seen. ‡ In fact, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that Bede

\* See Vol. III. p. 327, &c.

† See p. 97. of the present Volume.

‡ Ibid. p. 96.

held the same doctrines, and observed the same discipline as the Roman catholics of the present day. To deny this fact, betrays either great ignorance or great want of candour. Far wiser would it be to confess the truth, and to prove — nor do we think it would be difficult to prove — that those doctrines and this discipline were not received in the ancient ages of Christianity; that some of them are as opposite to ancient authority as they are to reason.\*

But Bede is a *poet* as well as a divine. In this capacity, however, he is far inferior to St. Aldhelm: in fact, he wants entirely the two requisites of the art, — fancy and pathos. We give an extract in the original; nor need we translate it, as the substance has before been given, in the Life of St. Cuthbert. †

“ Parvulus interea subiti discrimina morbi  
 Plectitur, atque regit vestigia languida pino.  
 Cumque die quâdam sub divo fessa lacessit  
 Membra, dolens, solus, mitis puer, — ecce repente  
 Venit equus niveo venerandus tegmine, necnon  
 Gratiâ, cornipedi similis, recubumque salutat,  
 Obsequium sibi ferre rogans. Cui talia reddit, —  
 ‘ Obsequiis nunc ipse tuis adsistere promptus  
 Vellem, in diro premeretur compede gressus,  
 Nam tumet ecce genu, nullis quod cura medentam,  
 Tempore jam multo valuit mollire lagunis.’  
 Desiliit hospes equo, palpat genu sedulus agrum,  
 Sic fatus, — ‘ Similæ nitidam cum lacte farinam  
 Olla coquat pariter ferventis in igne culinæ,  
 Hâcque istum calida sanandus inunge tumorem.’  
 Hæc memorans conscendit equum, quo venerat, illo  
 Calle domum remeans. Monitus, medicina secuta est:  
 Agnovitque sacer medicum venisse superni  
 Judicis a solio summo, qui munere clausus  
 Restituit visus piscis de felle Tobix.” ‡

\* Bede in Evangeliam S. Joannis, cap. 6. (Opera, tom. v. p. 508, &c.). Ejusdem Homilia in Joannem (apud Martene, Collectio Anecdotorum, tom. v. p. 323.). Ejusdem, De Tabernaculis, lib. i. (Opera, tom. iv. p. 840.), necnon Homilia in Epiphan. (Opera, vii. 320.), necnon De Templo Satorum (Opera, viii. 40.). Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, tom. xviii. 28.)

† Vol. III. p. 198.

‡ Bede, Vita S. Cuthberti, p. 269. edit. Smith.

The eighth century had other literary names. Of the chief, *St. Boniface*, we have already given a biographical sketch.\* Epistles, however, are the only works remaining of him. They are written in a respectable style for the period; but *as literary productions* they have little interest, however useful they may be towards a history of the times. A far greater name is *Alcuin*, of whom we have also spoken.† This celebrated man was not, as is generally supposed, the pupil of Bede, since he was born in the very year (735), of that writer's death.‡ As we have before alluded to the general character of his works, we shall do no more in the present place, than give a poetical extract. We may, however, observe, that both the prose and poetry of Alcuin are distinguished for an elegance, often for a justness of conception, not to be found in any other writer of the age. The faults, indeed of that age,—rhetorical pomp, puerile conceits, and absence of taste,—adhered to him as well as to the rest. Of his manner, we subjoin by way of example his farewell address to his cell, which is one of the most pleasing of his productions:

“ O, mea cella, mihi habitatio dulcis, amata  
 Semper in æternum, O, mea cella, vale!  
 Undique te cingit ramis resonantibus arbos,  
 Silvula florigeris semper onusta comis. •  
 Prata salutiferis florebant omnia et herbis  
 Quas medici quærit dextra salutis ore.  
 Flumina te cingunt florentibus undique ripis,  
 Retia piscator qua sua tendit ovans:  
 Pomiferis redolent ramis tua claustra per hortos,  
 Lilia cum rosulis candida mixta rubris.  
 Omne genus volucrum inatutinas personat odas  
 Atque Creatorem laudat in ore Deum.  
 In te personuit quondam vox alma magistri,  
 Quæ sacrosophiæ tradidit ore libros.

\* Vol. II. p. 195.

† Ibid. p. 247.

‡ How came this fact to escape Mr. Turner, who, in several places (*Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. p. 410. 414. 416.), asserts that Alcuin was the pupil of Bede? A worse anachronism, for which there is no excuse, is the statement that John Erigena was also a pupil of the Northumbrian luminary, the friend at once of Bede, Charlemagne, and Alfred—that is, the friend of the men who died in 735, 814, and 901 respectively!

In te temporibus certis laus sancta Tonantis  
 Pacificos sonuit vocibus atque animis.  
 Te, mea cella, modo lacrymosis plango camœnis,  
 Atque gemens casus pectore plango tuos:  
 Tu subito quoniam fugisti carmina satum  
 Atque ignota manus te modo tota tenet.  
 Te modo nec Flaccus, nec fatis Homerus habebit,  
 Nec pueri Musas per tua tecta canunt.  
 Vertitur omne decus sæculi, sic namque repente,  
 Omnia mutantur ordinibus variis.  
 Nil manet æternum, nil immutabile vere est;  
 Obscurat sacrum nox tenebrosa diem.  
 Decutit et flores subito hyems frigida pulchros.  
 Perturbat placidum et tristior aura mare.  
 Quae campis cervos agitabat sacra juvenus  
 Incumbit fessus nunc baculo senior.  
 Nos miseri! cur te fugitivum mundus amamus?  
 Tu fugis a nobis semper ubique ruens.\*

Which we may thus *render* :

Beloved cell, retirement's sweet abode!  
 Farewell, a last farewell, thy poet bids thee!  
 Beloved cell, by smiling woods embraced,  
 Whose branches, shaken by the genial breeze,  
 To meditation oft my mind disposed.  
 Around thee too their health-reviving herbs  
 In verdure gay the fertile meadows spread;  
 And murmuring near, by flowery banks confined,  
 Through fragrant meads the crystal streamlets glide,  
 Wherein his nets the joyful fisher casts.  
 And fragrant with the apple-bending bough,  
 With rose and lily joined, thy gardens smile;  
 While jubilant, along thy verdant glades  
 At dawn his melody each songster pours,  
 And to his God attunes the notes of praise.  
 Yet sweeter far the sounds which thou hast heard,  
 When to my infant mind by Christian sage  
 The books of holy wisdom were explained.  
 Still sweeter those which silent nature heard,  
 When grateful songs to Heaven's Great King arose.  
 Beloved cell, in mournful strains, alas!  
 And flowing tears, I leave thy ivy'd roof.  
 No more thy silence shall the Muses break;

\* Duchesne, Opera Alcuini, p. 1731.

No more beneath thy classic shade recline  
 Famed Horace, or the greater sire of song.  
 No more, when strangers' feet these precincts tread,  
 Thy solitudes with youthful music ring.  
 Thus all things change; in mortal life  
 There's no stability; like sudden gloss,  
 Swift fades the splendour of this slippery world:  
 The brightest day is soon by darkness driven;  
 By frosty blasts the fairest flowers are nipt;  
 By rising winds the tranquil sea is vex'd:  
 Here swifter youth the nimble stag pursues;  
 There, o'er his staff incumbent, totters age.  
 Why, world delusive, eager to betray,  
 Do we, blind mortals, love thee?

With Alcuin ends the glory of Latin literature during the Anglo-Saxon period. The invasion of the Northmen, and other causes, arrested the progress of the national intellect, and, indeed, replunged it into the barbarism from which it had so painfully emerged. In vain did Alfred strive to restore the study of letters: his example, his princely rewards, had but a momentary effect; for in the time of St. Odo ignorance again brooded over the land.

“ Alfred the Great had attempted to restore the empire of letters after the devastations of the Danes; but his success was temporary, and the Saxons speedily relapsed into their former ignorance. The spirit of Alfred seemed to be revived in Dunstan\*, and the labours of the bishop were more fortunate than those of the king. Long before he ascended the metropolitan throne, as soon as he could command the obedience of a small society of monks, he meditated the revival of learning; the knowledge which he had acquired from the Irish ecclesiastics, he liberally imparted to his pupils; and from his monastery of Glastonbury diffused a spirit of improvement throughout the Saxon church. Ethelwald imbibed the sentiments of his master; and the bishop would often descend from his more important functions to the humble employment of instructing youth in the first rudiments of grammar, and of interrogating them respecting their progress in the knowledge of the Latin tongue. From his school at Winchester masters were distributed to the different monasteries; and the reputa-

\* See Dunstan's Life, Vol. III.



tion of their disciples reflected a lustre on their talents and industry. In times of ignorance no great portion of knowledge is required to excite admiration ; but we should judge of the merit of men by comparing them with their contemporaries, not with those who have lived in happier times. Yet, among the Saxon scholars of this period, there were some who have merited no vulgar praise. The commentaries of Bridferth, the monk of Ramsey, display an extent of reading, and an accuracy of calculation, which would have done honour to the most eminent philosophers of former ages ; and the name of Elfric, the disciple of Ethelwold, has been rendered more illustrious by the utility of his writings, than by the archiepiscopal mitre with which he was honoured.\*

But though a stimulus was thus given to the exercise of the intellect, it was neither powerful nor universal : few ecclesiastics were roused by it even to the studies which became their character. Much of this, indeed, was owing to the same cause, — the devastations of the Northmen, — which continued during the first quarter of the eleventh century ; yet the nation was not inclined to such pursuits. Under the long, and on the whole peaceful reign of the Confessor, we might expect to behold some revival of a better spirit ; but no ! look where we may, we behold the same ignorance, the same immorality, the same indifference to the most obvious duties of morals, no less than to the noblest subjects of the intellect. Nothing indeed could exceed the contempt with which the Norman ecclesiastics regarded the native clergy : and that this contempt was richly deserved, is evident from the mental sterility of the period, and from the acknowledgment of the Saxons themselves :—

“ Such was the general depravity, that the Norman conquest, if considered in its immediate evils, may appear as much a dispensation of Divine justice upon an abandoned people, as it proved to be of mercy in its results. Even the forms of Christianity were in danger of being lost through the criminal ignorance of the clergy, who could scarcely stammer out a service which they did not understand ; one who had any

\* Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 492.

knowledge of the Latin grammar was regarded as a prodigy of learning."\* — "Such was their degradation, and such the irreverence with which the half-converted barbarians conformed to the religious usages of the age, that the nobles, instead of attending at church, would have matins and mass performed in the chambers where they were in bed with their wives and concubines.† A horrid tyranny was exercised over the peasants; the lords, for the sake of supplying their own prodigal excesses, seized their goods, and sold their persons to foreign slave-dealers. Girls were kidnapped for this abominable traffic; and it was common for these petty tyrants to sell their female vassals for prostitution at home, or to foreign traders, even though they were pregnant by themselves. When such actions were so frequent as to become a national reproach, no heavier afflictions could fall upon the nation than its offences deserved."‡

There can, indeed, be no doubt that the Norman invasion, though one of the severest, was also one of the most salutary inflictions that ever befel this country. This abominable people (the Anglo-Saxons), had filled the measure of their own iniquities; and mercy no less than justice required their chastisement, as the forerunner of their future regeneration.

III. SCIENCE. — Though, in the progress of nations towards refinement, the arts precede literature, the case is different with science, which in a physical sense is the application of principles to art. But the investigation of principles requires both the tardy accumulation of experience, and the coolest reasoning in comparing results, and in deducing from that comparison consequences which may serve as the bases of future investigation; and which may be held as so many tests to estimate the value of new discoveries. Hence, in all countries, science has progressed with civilisation; and the higher the scale of the general intellect, the more

\* These words are almost literally those of an unexceptionable judge William of Malmesbury.

† This is too strong. We have no evidence that things were *quite* so bad. We remember a passage like it; but it is an individual, not a general character.

‡ Southey, Book of the Church, i. 115. In this literary sketch of the Saxon period, we do not include Alfred, who was chiefly a translator, — of Boethius and Bede. The reader, however, who wishes for some information respecting this celebrated king, may consult Turner.

comprehensive, the more certain these principles. Nor is the case in regard to metaphysical or ethical science very dissimilar. From the earliest ages the human soul had been recognised as a peculiar substance ; its nature and the mode of its existence had exercised the subtlest intellects ; its operations were discovered to be distinct from those of matter ; and men were anxious to learn by what laws it was governed. To the Saxons, however, this was a subject exceedingly dark ; amidst the conflicting opinions of ancient authorities, they had no standard by which to estimate the value of truth ; and from their religious feelings they were afraid to plunge into the boundless ocean of speculation, where their faith was every moment in danger of being wrecked. It cannot, therefore, be expected that the Anglo-Saxons who were an infant nation, should have made much progress in the sciences, whether physical or moral. In fact, as they, like the more ancient nations, held science to depend not so much on experience or defined principle, as on authority, they were studious only to collect from the great writers on any given branch, what the world then knew : they seldom dreamed of adding to the stock ; their minds, indeed, had not the subtlety of the Greek or the Arabian ; nor, if they had, would the troubled circumstances of the period have allowed them that calm uninterrupted leisure for speculation which have distinguished nations more fortunately circumstanced. But, though science rested on the fallacious basis of authority or speculation, the state in which it existed during the Anglo-Saxon period, may well excite curiosity. As the subject is interesting, and not uninteresting, we shall devote a few pages to a brief consideration of its leading branches.

From the time of St. Aldhelm, the Anglo-Saxons paid great attention to the science of numbers, which they justly regarded as the key to all the rest. But little are we accustomed to reflect on the insuperable nature of the difficulties with which they had to contend. As the Arabian figures were not introduced into England

until late in the tenth century, they were compelled to follow the tedious and unsatisfactory mode of computation left by the Romans. Every operation was of necessity by these Roman letters, I, V, X, L, C, D, M. In a dialogue between master and scholar, on which the venerable Bede appears to have bestowed some attention, we learn the method employed by the Saxon schoolmasters, to train youth in the rudiments of this important branch of knowledge. Having dwelt at some length on numbers expressed at full length in language, from *unus* to *mille*, the master proceeds to discuss the seven letters, which, for the greater readiness of calculations, were universally received as the representatives of those numbers. These signs, he says, have a two-fold signification, according as they stand alone or combined. Thus I alone signifies *one*, V *five*, X *ten*, L *fifty*, C *one hundred*, D *five hundred*, M *one thousand*. He then proceeds to give the value of these signs in composition, and of certain arbitrary marks from the combinations of units with V to those of  $\bar{M}$ . Though any number could be expressed by these signs from I to  $\bar{M}$  (one million), yet in tedious problems the necessary combinations could scarcely be formed; and when the student descended to the fractions of an integer, he was absolutely at a stand. Subsequently, indeed, every quantity was supposed to be divisible into twelve equal parts, and computable like the uncial division of the Romans. This improvement, however, was soon found to be inadequate, or at least most tedious in verbal calculations; and to shorten the labours, a sort of manual and digital arithmetic was devised. For the satisfaction of the curious reader we will give a few of the directions, premising that each finger had a name; the little one was the auricularis; the next to the little one, the medicus; the long one the impudicus; the index and pollex were of course the fore finger and the thumb. To commence with the fingers of the *left* hand,—for the same signs by those of the right betokened, as we shall soon perceive, very different quantities:

“ Quum ergo dicis *unum*, *minimum* in lævâ digitum inflectens, in mediū palmæ artum infiges.

“ Quum dicis *duo*, *secundum à minimo* flexum, ibidem impones.

“ Quum dicis *tria*, *tertium* similiter inflectes.

“ Quum dicis *quatuor*, ibidem *minimum* levatis.

“ Quum dicis *quinque*, *secundum à minimum* similiter eriges.

“ Quum dicis *sex*, *tertium* nihilminus elevabis, medio duntaxat solo qui *medicus* appellatur, in medium palmæ fixo.

“ Quum dicis *septem*, *minimum* solum, cæteris interim levatis, super palmæ radicem pones — *juxta* quod,

“ Quum dicis *octo*, *medicum*.

“ Quum dicis *novem*, *impudicum* e regione compones.

“ Quum dicis *decem*, *unguem* indicis in medio figes artu pollicis.”

Other numbers were expressed by various digital signs: thus 20 was denoted by thrusting the top of the thumb between the middle joints of the index and impudicus; 30 by joining the nails of the index and pollex; 40 by drawing the inner part of the pollex over the index; 50 by bending the pollex towards the palm in the form of the Greek ρ. The other numbers up to 90 were expressed by various positions of the pollex and index.—For higher numbers it was necessary to employ the digits of the *right* hand. Thus 100 was expressed just like 10 in the left hand, that is, by fixing the nail of the forefinger in the middle joint of the thumb. 200 in the right was like the sign of 20 in the left; 300 like 30, and so on up to 900; the position of the fingers in the right hand denoting a value ten times greater than the corresponding positions of those in the left. 1000 was expressed by the right hand in the same manner as 1 in the left, viz. by raising the little finger; 2000 in the right like 2 in the left; 3000 like 3; and so on as high as 9000. For quantities higher than 9000, more important signs were necessary. To denote 10,000, the back of the left hand was laid flat on the breast, the fingers, however, pointing towards the throat; for, if they pointed towards the right side, the number was 20,000. 30,000 was denoted by the

flat hand, but by the thumb bending to the breast-bone ; 40,000 by placing the hand on the navel ; 50,000 by the same position, but the thumb being turned inwards to the navel ; 60,000 by laying the flat of the hand on the thigh ; 70,000 by laying the back of the hand on the same part ; and so on. The corresponding motions of the *right* hand denoted ten times the quantity of those with the left.

It may appear surprising that with such rude methods the Anglo-Saxons could compute at all, whenever multiplication and division were concerned ; yet that they did resolve several in position, or the rule of false, is evident from the examples given by the Venerable “ to sharpen his pupils,” *ad acuendos juvenes*. “ A certain man walking on the way, met other men, and said to them, ‘ If you were as many again, half as many, and one quarter as many, your number would be 100 ;’ how many were they ? ” That they were not unacquainted with the powers of numbers, with the square and the cube at least, is certain ; and other quotations involve a knowledge of progression, both arithmetical and geometrical. But the process was so tedious, that we need not wonder at the saying of St. Aldhelm, that he had long found arithmetic not only the most difficult, but absolutely an insuperable study.\*

The cosmogony of the Anglo-Saxons was founded on that of the ancient philosophers ; but so far altered as to be accordant with the Mosaic economy. The philosophical treatises of Bede have had the advantage of being commented by Bridferth of Ramsey, a monk as learned as Bede himself ; and in a subsequent writer, the author of the four books, *De Elementis*, which are certainly not Bede’s, though ascribed to him, we find notions still much more consistent with the present state of science. On this subject, however, we are imperfectly informed ; we have hitherto had no opportunity

\* Bede, *De Arithmetiis Numeris*, p. 71. *De Computo Dialogus*, p. 87. *De Arithmetiis Propositionibus*, p. 100, &c., necnon *De Indigitatione, cum Glossis Bridfertii*, p. 132, &c. (*Opera*, tom. i.).

of studying the ancient systems of the universe, from Pythagoras to Bridferth\*, and we will not insult the reader by presuming to write on what we do not at present understand. Yet, as it is a most curious subject, we give its exposition in the words of one whom in the present and the preceding volume we have frequently quoted.† We must, however, observe that even *he* has no scientific or very profound knowledge of it; but he writes much better on it than we could, unless we devoted much more time to its consideration than we can now spare.

“ The origin of the visible universe had perplexed and confounded the philosophers of antiquity. At each step they sunk deeper into an abyss of darkness and absurdity; and the eternal chaos of the Stoic, the shapeless matter of Aristotle, and the self-existent atoms of Democritus, while they amused their imagination, could only fatigue and irritate their minds. But the Saxon student was guided by an unerring light; and in the inspired narrative of Moses, he beheld, without the danger of deception, the whole visible world start into existence at the command of the Almighty Creator. Of the scriptural cosmogony, his religion forbade him to doubt; but in explaining the component parts of sensible objects, he was at liberty to indulge in speculation. With the Ionic school Bede admitted the four elements: of fire, from which the heavenly bodies derive their light; of air, which is destined to the support of animal existence; of water, which surrounds, pervades, and binds together the earth on which we dwell; and of the earth itself, which is accurately suspended in the centre, and equally poised on all sides by the pressure of the revolving universe.‡ To the different combinations of these elements,

\* We are ashamed to make such a confession, but candour requires it. If the poet should have run the whole circle of learning, surely such a race is more incumbent on the historian.

† Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*. As for Mr. Turner, he has attempted no classification or analysis on the subject, but merely extracted a few unconnected opinions.

‡ To explain and confirm, and often to amplify the text of Lingard, we give occasional extracts from the original: we do so that the learned reader to whom Bede is not accessible—and to few such can he be accessible—may judge.

‡ *Mundus est universitas omnis, quæ constat ex cælo et terrâ, quatuor elementis in speciem orbis absolute globata; igne, quo sidera lucent; aere, quo cuncta viventia spirant; aquis, quæ terram irrigando et penetrando communiunt. Atque ipsa terra, quæ mundi media atque sine librata volubili circa eam, universitate pendet immobilis.*—*Bædc, De Natura Rerum*, cap. 3.

with the additional aid of four primary qualities of heat and cold, moisture and dryness, he attributed the various properties of bodies, and the exhaustless fecundity of nature.\* Pythagoras had taught, though the conclusion was deduced, not from the observations of the phenomena, but from the principles of a fanciful and erroneous theory, that the centre of the world was occupied by the sun, round which the celestial spheres performed their revolutions. But the truth of his opinion was too repugnant to the daily illusions of the senses to obtain credit; and the majority of philosophers, for many centuries, adopted that arrangement of the heavenly bodies which forms the basis of the Ptolomean system. From them it was received by the Christians, and adjusted, with a few modifications, to their religious opinions. According to Bede, the terrestrial atmosphere is immediately surrounded by the orbits of the seven planets, and the firmament of the fixed stars; on the firmament repose the waters mentioned in the Mosaic cosmogony †, and these are again encircled by the highest and ætherial heaven, destined for the residence of the angelic spirits. From the diurnal motion of the stars, which describe concentric circles, of a smaller diameter as they approach towards the north, he infers that this immense system daily revolves with amazing rapidity round the earth, on an imaginary axis, of which the two extremities are called the northern and southern poles. ‡ In the present advanced state of astronomical knowledge, we are tempted to smile at the idea of the Grecian philosopher, who conceived the stars to be so many

\* *Elementa sibi met sicut natura, sic etiam situ differunt.* Terra etiam, ut gravissima, et quæ ab alia natura sufferri non potest, ipsum in creaturis obtinet locum. Aqua vero, quanto levior terrâ, tanto est aere gravior. Ignis quoque materialiter accensus, continuo naturalem sui sedem super aera quærit. Quæ tamen quadam naturæ propinquitate sibi met ita committentur, ut terra quidem arida et frigida, frigida aquæ; aqua vero frigida et humida, humido aeri; porro aer humidus et calidus, calido igni; ignis quoque calidus et aridus, terræ societur aridæ.—*De Natura Rerum*, cap. 4.

† "See Genesis, chap. i. 'How,' exclaims Bridferth of Ramsay, the commentator of Bede's philosophical works, 'can the waters rest on the firmament without falling to the earth?'—'I know not,' he replies, 'but 't is authoritatively of the Scriptures must silence the objections of reason.' (Glossæ in cap. 8.) The ancient author of the elements of philosophy published under the name of Bede, is justly dissatisfied with the answer, and explains the passage of the waters, which are separated by evaporation from the ocean, and suspended in the atmosphere."—*De Elementis Philosophicæ*, lib. ii.

‡ Cælum subtiles igneæque naturæ rotundumque et a centro terræ æquis spatii undique collectum. Unde est et convexum mediumque quacunque cernatur, inerrabili celeritate quotidie circumagi sapientes mundi dixerunt, ita ut rueret si non planetarum occurso moderetur; argumento siderum nitentes, quæ fixo semper cursu circumvolant, septentrionalibus breviores gyros ordinem peragentibus, cuius vertex est: tremos circa quos sphaera cæli volvitur, polos nuncupant, glaciali rigore tabentes.—*Bede, De Rerum Natura*, cap. 5.



concave mirrors fixed in the firmament, to collect the igneous particles which are scattered through the heavens, and to reflect them to the earth. From the assertion of Bede, that they borrow their brilliancy from the sun, we might naturally infer that he had adopted the opinion of Epicurus; but his commentator, the monk of Ramsey, informs us, that he considered them as bodies of fire, which emitted a light too feeble to affect the organs of vision, except when it was strengthened by the denser rays of the sun. That they were not extinguishable in the morning, and rekindled each evening, as had been taught by Xenophanes, was proved by their appearance during the obscurity of a solar eclipse; and of their influence on the atmosphere no one could remain ignorant who had remarked the storms that annually attend the heliacal rising of Arcturus and Orion, and had felt the heat with which the dog-star scorches the earth.\* The twofold and opposite motions which seem to animate the planets, could not escape the knowledge of an attentive observer; but satisfactorily to account for them, so long as the earth was supposed immovable, baffled all the efforts of human ingenuity. The Saxons justly considered the natural direction of their orbits to lie from west to east, but conceived that their progress was constantly opposed by the more powerful rotation of the fixed stars, which compelled them daily to revolve round the earth in a contrary direction. In their explanation of the other phenomena, they were equally unfortunate. The ingenious invention of epicycles was unknown, or rejected by them; and they ascribed most of the inequalities observed in the planetary motions to the more or less oblique action of the solar rays, by which they were sometimes accelerated, sometimes retarded, and sometimes entirely suspended. Yet they were acquainted with the important distinction between real and apparent motion. Though they conceived the planetary orbits to be circular, they had learned from Pliny that each possessed a different centre; and thence inferred, that in the perigeum their velocity must be apparently increased, in the apogeeum apparently diminished.† Among

\* Bede, *De Rerum Natura*, cap. 11.

† Inter cælum terrasque septem sidera pendent, certis discretis spatiis, quæ vocantur errantia, contrarium mundo agentia cursum, id est, levum, illo semper in dextrâ præcipiti. Et quamvis assidua conversione immensæ celeritatis accoluntur ab ea, rapianturque in occasus, adverso tamen ire motu per imos quæque passus advertuntur; nunc inferius, nunc superius, propter obliquitatem signiferi vagantia.—*De Natura Rerum*, cap. 12. Sunt autem sui cuique planetarum circuli, quos Græci absidas in stellis vocant, alii que quam mundo, quoniam terra a verticibus duobus, quos appellaverunt polos, centrum cæli est, necnon et signiferi obliqui inter eos siti. Omnia autem hæc constant ratione circini semper indubitata. Ergo ab alio cuique centro absides suæ exurgunt: ideoque diversos habent orbes, motusque dissimiles.—*Ibid.* cap. 14.

the planets the first place was justly given to the sun, the great source of light and heat. They described this luminary as a globular mass of fiery particles, preserved in a state of ignition by perpetual rotation. Had it been fixed, says Bede, like the stars in the firmament, the equatorial portion of the earth would have been reduced to ashes by the intensity of its rays: but the beneficence of the Creator wisely ordained that it should daily and annually travel round the earth; and thus produce the succession of the night and day, the vicissitudes of the seasons, and the divisions of time. Its daily revolution is completed between midnight and midnight; and is usually divided into twenty-four hours, each of which admits of four different subdivisions, into four points (five in lunar computations), ten minutes, fifteen parts or degrees, and forty moments. Its annual revolution through the twelve signs of the zodiac, which it divides into two equal parts, forms the solar year, and consists of 365 days.\* As it recedes towards the brumal solstice, its rays in the morning and evening are intercepted by the convexity of the equator, and their absence prolongs the duration of darkness, and favours the cold of winter; but in proportion as it returns towards the tropic of Capricorn, the days gradually lengthen, and nature seems reanimated by the constant accumulation of heat. But here a rational doubt will occur. If the rays, which daily warm and illuminate the earth, be emitted from the sun, is there no reason to fear that, after a certain period, the powers of this luminary may be totally exhausted? Bede readily answered, that its losses were quickly repaired by the numerous exhalations of the ocean situated under the torrid zone.† To feed the sun with water is an idea which will probably appear ludicrous to the reader; but it originated from the tenets of Thales, the parent of the Grecian philosophy, and had been consecrated by the general adoption of his successors.‡ The regular increase and decrease of the moon have always called the attention of the learned towards the phenomena of that planet. Respecting its magnitude, the Saxons followed two opposite opinions. Some, on the authority of Pliny, maintained that it was larger, others, with greater truth, conceived that it was smaller, than the earth. Its phases they justly ascribed to the ever-varying position of the illuminated disk§; nor were they ignorant that its orbit was subject to several anomalies, which defied the precision of

\* Bedæ Opera, tom. ii. p. 26. 53. 206.

† Bede, De Rerum Natura, cap. 19. "Solis ignem dicunt aquâ nutrirî."

‡ Aristotle, Metaph. lib. i. cap. 3. Cicero, De Natura Deorum, lib. i. cap. 10.

§ Bede, De Ratione Temporum, cum Commentariis Bridferthi, pp. 111, 112.

the most exact calculator.\* Bede explains, with sufficient accuracy, the nature of the lunar and solar eclipses; and observes, that their recurrence at each conjunction and opposition is prevented by the obliquity of the moon's orbit.†

To this luminous, though by no means complete exposition, we shall add a few observations. Considering the earth as a fixed point in the centre of the universe, and that the sun and the planets revolved round it at unequal distances, their orbits gradually enlarging as we proceed from that centre, they had a clear idea not only of the motions of the heavenly bodies, but of the diurnal motion of each planet round its own axis. They believed that Saturn, the highest of the planets, — the nearest, says Bede, to the celestial firmament, — required thirty years to revolve round the sun; that Jupiter required twelve, Mars two, the sun three hundred and sixty-five days, and one quarter; and so on till we descend to the moon, the lowest, because the nearest planet to the earth, the orbit of which required only twenty-seven days to traverse.‡ Eclipses they understood to proceed from the conjunction of any three given planets in the same part of the ecliptic, in the same sign of the zodiac; that in this case, as the three happened to occupy for a moment a right line, the most remote must of necessity be wholly or partially hidden by the one in the centre. Hence, if the sun and the moon happened to be at the same moment in the same part of the ecliptic, in a right line with the earth, the moon would exercise a twofold occultation; from the earth it would hide a part of the sun, from the sun part of the earth. Comets were supposed by the Venerable to portend evil to man; sometimes physical evils, as storms and heat, pestilence; sometimes

\* "Lunam non minui nec crescere dicunt, sed a soli illustratam, a parte quam habet ad eum paulatim, vel ab eo recedendo, vel a appropinquando, nobis candidam partem revolvere, vel atram."—*De Natura Rerum*, cap. xx. p. 25.

† *Ibid.* cap. xxii. xxiii. *De Temporum Ratione*, cap. v. Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, pp. 331—336.

‡ Venus, however though lower than the sun, was held to be longer by three days in her revolution.

moral ones, as wars and revolutions of kingdoms. The influence in this respect possessed by the comets, was easily transferred to the planets. Hence the prevalence of judicial astrology in every country where the phenomena of nature, and the laws of sidereal motion, are but imperfectly understood. The influence of sun and moon on both vegetable and mineral productions was recognised: why, then, might not the same influence be exercised over the human frame? over the mind itself? over the destiny of man? There was not, indeed, much logic in the inference; but it acquired additional force from the events which sometimes accidentally attended certain configurations of the planets. Men sometimes reason strangely, even in countries where a high degree of civilisation exists. The poor rustic, who, because he had lost two cows in two successive years, when the moon happened to be at full, maintained that such a period was fatal to distempered cattle, may be placed on a level with the believers in judicial astrology. In that pretended science, the Anglo-Saxons were, for the most part, steadfast believers. St. Aldhelm learned the construction of horoscopes in the school of the abbot Adrian: though Bede reprobated the knowledge as false and pernicious, he yet shows that he was sufficiently acquainted with its principles, and Alcuin was far from ignorant of them. All three, however, were too wise, because too religious, to suppose that human actions were necessarily subject to sidereal influence: they knew that the will was free, or, if it had a bias to evil, that grace was sufficient to counteract the mischievous tendency. In other respects, even astrology was useful, since it necessarily involved some knowledge of astronomy. Most, however, of the Anglo-Saxon scholars were better occupied than in these forbidden pursuits; they were eager to calculate the orbits of the planets, their rising and setting, the return of eclipses, and other phenomena.\*

\* Bede, *De Natura Rerum*, necnon *De Ratione Temporum*, passim.

The influence of the moon on the tides was not unknown to Bede. On comparing their ebb and flow with the motions of that planet, he suspected that the waters were attracted to it by some mysterious power inherent in it. He found that as the moon receded from the sun, the tides were daily retarded many minutes in their approach to the shore; but that when the two planets approached their conjunction, the waters rose higher. He remarked that the decrease happened from the fifth to the twelfth, from the twentieth to the twenty-seventh day of each moon; and he disproved, by his own daily observations, the opinion of the ancient philosophers, that in every part of the ocean the tides began to flow at the same moment: he proved that they reached some parts of the coast long before others; that they reached the mouth of the Tyne before the coast of the Deiri. With respect to some other natural phenomena, Bede was less rational, — always assuming that the *Mundi Constitutio* is his composition. If it be not, however, it is assuredly that of some other Anglo-Saxon, not much subsequent to his period; and it may, therefore, be safely regarded as a record of the national opinions on such matters. — There are four humours in man, which resemble the four elements, which flourish at different times, and rule in different periods of life. 1. Blood, like air, increases in spring, and reigns in youth. 2. Anger is like to fire, which increases in summer, and reigns in youth. 3. Melancholy to earth, which grows in autumn, and reigns in manhood. 4. Phlegm to water, which freezes in winter, and rules in old age. As in the natural world the harmony of the whole depends on the equilibrium of their elements, so in the moral, the co-existence of these qualities in their due proportion preserves the harmony of the man. Earthquakes were believed by some to be caused by the winds, which, having entered the numerous deep caverns of the earth, and finding no outlet, roared and struggled with such force as to shake the neighbouring countries. By others, however, the cause was supposed to be the

motion of the abyss on which the earth is placed; when the former moves so must the latter. Some again held, that it was produced by that terrible animal, the leviathan, which, when tormented by the scorching sun, attempted, in its fury, to enfold within its coils the whole globe of the earth: sometimes, too, it swallowed such an immensity of water, that when it disgorged the mass, the whole earth was shaken by it. They were more successful in the investigation of the nature of the clouds, which they held to be water exhaled from the ground, and which fell in rain or snow, according to the heat or cold of the atmosphere. In explaining thunder and lightning, however, they were sufficiently puzzled: their general opinion seemed to be, that when three cardinal winds met in the atmosphere, they forced the clouds together with such velocity that, by the concussion, not only a loud sound, but sparks, or even streams of fire, were emitted. Others, however, maintained, that the sound was caused by the efforts of the winds, pent up in the clouds, to escape from their prison-houses. Their geographical notions were a strange mixture of truth and absurdity. With the distinction of zones and climates they were well acquainted; and the treatise of Bede (borrowed from Adamnan), *De Locis Sanctis*, proves that they paid some attention to foreign countries. In fact, with such notions of countries as were to be found in ancient writers, they were of necessity acquainted; and they had, besides, several geographers, especially Strabo and Pomponius Mela, before them. In some of their notions, however, they exceeded the Spaniard in absurdity.

“The MS. Tiberius, B. 5., contains a topographical description of some eastern regions, in Latin and Saxon. From this we learn there is a place in the way to the Red Sea which contains red hens, and that if any man touches them, his hand and all his body are burned immediately; also that pepper is guarded by serpents, which are driven away by fire, and this makes the pepper black. We read of people with dogs’ heads, boars’ tusks, and horses’ manes, and breathing flames: also of

ants as big as dogs, with feet like grasshoppers, red and black. These creatures dig gold for fifteen days; men go with female camels and their young ones to fetch it, which the ants permit on having the liberty to eat the young camels. The same learned work informed our ancestors that there was a white human race fifteen feet high, with two faces on one head, long nose and black hair, who, in the time of parturition, went to India to lie in. Other men had thighs twelve feet long, and breasts seven feet high; they were cannibals. There was another sort of mankind with no heads, who had eyes and mouths in their breasts: they were eight feet tall, and eight feet broad. Other men had eyes which shone like a lamp in a dark night. In the ocean there was a soft-voiced race, who were human to the navel, but all below were the limbs of an ass. These fables even came so near as Gaul; for it tells us that at Liconia, in Gaul, there were men of three colours, with heads like lions, and mouths like the sails of a windmill; they were twenty feet tall; they run away and sweat blood, but were thought to be men. Let us, however, in justice to our ancestors, recollect that most of these fables are gravely recorded by Pliny. The Anglo-Saxons, therefore, were not more credulous or ill informed than the Roman population. The descriptions of foreign ladies were not gallant. It is stated that near Babylon there were women with beards to their breasts; they were clothed in horses' hides, and were great hunters; but they used tigers and leopards instead of dogs. Other women had boars' tusks, hair to their heels, and a cow's tail; they were thirteen feet high: they had a beautiful body, white as marble; but they had camels' feet. Black men living on burning mountains; trees bearing precious stones; and a golden vineyard, which had berries 150 feet long, which produced jewels; gryphons, phœnixes, and beasts with asses' ears, sheep's wool, and birds' feet; are among the other wonders which instructed our ancestors. The accounts in the MS. Vitalian, A. 15., rival the phenomena just recited, with others as credible, and are also illustrated with drawings."

This certainly exceeds the statement of good old Pomponius, that on the shores of the Baltic lived a race of men with ears so large, that every night one of them served for a couch, the other for a coverlet.\*

The Anglo-Saxons had a smattering of some other

\* Bede, *De Natura Rerum*, *De Temporum Ratione*; necnon *De Mundi Constitutione*, passim. Lingard, *Antiquities*, p. 338. Turner, *Anglo-Saxons*, vol iii, book ix, chap 7.

sciences. With *chemistry* they must have had some acquaintance, or they could not have prepared colours which, even at this day, after the lapse of above 1000 years, are found to be so bright, wherever discovered.\* Their art of gold-writing must also have required some knowledge of its principles. In *medicine* every nation is compelled to make some proficiency. In all barbarous times, diseases are regarded as inflictions of some supernatural power; and to propitiate that power is the first care of the patient. Hence the charms, spells, exorcisms, and incantations which prevailed in this country, even after the introduction of Christianity. Such superstitions are too deeply rooted to be shaken by any sudden attack; time only, and the progress of civilisation, can extirpate them. By degrees, however, the instruction and example of the clergy introduced attempts at healing, which, though necessarily imperfect, were most useful, since they not only aimed a fatal blow at the still lingering demon of magic, but laid a foundation on which human experience could work. In every great monastery there was one brother, at least, wholly occupied in medicine; and he was the physician of the surrounding country no less than of the monks. Some of the parochial clergy, no doubt, imitated their example. In time, however, medicine was followed as a distinct profession; and leaches wrote no less than prescribed. There is still extant a MS., probably as old as king Alfred, containing above 200 recipes for various disorders. *Surgery* was in a still ruder state, since a knowledge of the simplest herbs is far more easy of acquisition than the reduction of inflammation, or operations with the lancet or knife. Their times of bleeding, too, were superstitiously chosen: it was particularly to be avoided, while the light of the moon and the tides were encreasing. One MS. points out nine days in every month in which bleeding was sure to be pernicious, and nine more on which certain

\* See a remarkable proof of this fact in Raine's St. Cuthbert.



hours must carefully be chosen for that purpose. Even Theodore and Bede were not wholly exempt from this superstition.\*

If, from the physical or natural, we pass to the intellectual sciences of the Saxons,—to what we may term their mental philosophy,—we shall find some thing that may occupy a passing attention. Before knowledge can be conveyed, we must prepare the vehicle: hence grammar and dialectics were the first objects of attention to the youthful student. Whether the treatises, “*Incunabula Grammaticæ Artis*,” “*De Octo Partibus Orationis*,” which stand the first among the works of Bede, be really his, is of no consequence; they are, undoubtedly, the productions of the Saxon mind. In them we find the same parts of speech—except the article, which the Latin language had not—as are now taught in our schools, and the definition of each is substantially the same. The treatise by Alcuin, drawn up for the use of the students at the imperial court, is founded on the same principles; but the definitions are sometimes more subtle, sometimes, too, more puerile,—a fact for which the reader will be prepared when we observe that it is chiefly taken from Priscian. Thus, in nouns, we have the various distinctions of quality, comparison, gender, number, figure, case; of prænomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen; of appellative and proper; of corporeal, incorporeal, radical, derivative, compositive, denominative, diminutive, homonymous, synonymous; with others, adjectival or prænominal, interminable as those of the ancient grammarians. It is a singular fact, that while, in other branches of knowledge, the progress of civilisation and refinement has added to its nomenclature, in grammar we have rejected many of the old distinctions, and sacrificed precision to simplicity. Alcuin’s treatise on *Dialectics* is no mean attempt to assist the reasoning powers of the youthful, or even mature, mind: he thought the subject of so much consequence,

\* Saxon MSS. in the Museum, cited by Turner, ubi supra.

that in the dialogue — his favourite mode of communicating knowledge — he introduces Charlemagne and himself as the speakers. It, too, is substantially the same with our modern works on logic: nor do we see that from his days, and long before his days, the human mind has gained much either in the invention or the use of argumentative weapons. In *metaphysics* there is a very bounded field: we have the names of three only, Bede, Alcuin, and Johannes Erigena, who distinguished themselves in abstract enquiries; and, even among them, it may be doubted whether Bede should be ranked. The treatise *De Substantiis* contains one expression indicating a much more modern period.\* It may, indeed, be said, that it has been added by subsequent transcribers; but we fear the work exhibits more subtlety than that simple-minded, however learned, Northumbrian possessed. The same arguments will apply to the second of the treatises, *De Elementis Philosophiæ*: but, in fact, there is stronger evidence in favour of the negative. In most of the ancient MSS. of this treatise, another name appears, Gulielmus de Concha, — a writer certainly of the tenth century. The metaphysical facts, however, of this latter work bear little proportion to the physical: they seem rather incidentally introduced, as much by way of illustrating the antagonist properties of matter and spirit as for any other reason. The treatise of Alcuin, *De Anima*, contains no great solidity, none whatever of profundity. He separates and defines the faculties of the soul, its modes of operation: he does not investigate its nature. He dwells chiefly on the memory, the will, and the understanding; which, though separately developed, are indissolubly united in the same spiritual nature. Should we also rank among the phi-

\* The author, whoever he was, reckons 1000 years from the origin of Christianity, or even from the time of the Apocalypse being written. *Opus est cunctis fidelibus, ne ecclesia sancta sub temporis præteriti partibus*

age, it is surprising that any one should be found to father this work on Bede. The style and manner, too, suffice to disprove the paternity alleged.

losophical works of Alcuin his treatise against the heresy held by Felix of Urgel and Elipando of Toledo? \* At this time theology was certainly beginning to be a science, even in England; while, before, it was merely a collection of scriptural texts, supported by extracts from the fathers. *Now* men began, not merely to extract, but to analyse and reason on the most mysterious points of faith; and though, in England, the invasions of the Danes, during part of the ninth and most of the tenth century, arrested the progress of theology as well as of every other mental pursuit, yet the example of archbishop Elfric proves, that even here the mind was conversant with such mysteries. † Hitherto the dogmas of the incarnation, the trinity, faith, grace, predestination, were held to be things too sublime for the human intellect — things to be silently adored by a subdued reason. In the more ancient church, indeed, such subjects had been much agitated; but, during four centuries, at least, curiosity had slumbered, even in the regions where Christianity had always prevailed. Among the nations of Germanic origin, it began for the first time to exist; but the attempts to gratify it were isolated: nor can scholastic theology be said to exist as a general science, however it might be partially cultivated by individuals, until Paschasius Radbertus, by his treatise on the Eucharist, led divines into the dangerous field. ‡ But though Paschasius may be said to have laid the first stone, and Johannes Scotus § to have assisted at the foundation of the building, the work proceeded slowly until Gerbert, and Berengarius, and St. Anselm laid their hands to the edifice: nor was it fully reared until the thirteenth century, when Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Alexander Hales, and a host besides, laboured at the task. Hence, from Alcuin little could be expected deserving the name of philosophy: but he had a clear understanding; and

\* See History of Spain and Portugal, vol. iv. p. 305.

† See Vol. III. p. 336. of the present compendium.

‡ See Vol. III. p. 331.

§ Vol. II. p. 265.

he applied both scriptural texts, and the comments of doctors, with considerable force. He proved, in opposition to Felix and Elipando, that Christ is not merely the natural and nuncupative, but the eternal Son of God, not merely in his human capacity, but in his divine essence; that the filiation did not begin with the incarnation in the womb of the Virgin, but was from the fathomless depths of eternity. In his two works, — for he answers Felix and Elipando separately, — Alcuin exhibits great acuteness and more ecclesiastical erudition than was possessed by any man of the same century. We have, however, before characterised him as a writer\*, and we will no longer dwell on the subject. The same may be said in regard to Johannes Scotus, to the sketch of whose life we refer the reader.† He, strictly speaking, is the only philosopher of whom these islands could boast; and he was not an Anglo-Saxon, but an Irishman.‡

From the preceding sketch it may be inferred, that the Anglo-Saxon intellect was far from contemptible; that, in poetry and prose, in the vernacular and the church idiom, the country, so long as its tranquillity was not affected by foreign invasions, obtained more distinction than any other during the same period. No other, indeed, can produce an ecclesiastic so learned as Bede; or a Latin poet comparable with St. Aldhelm; or vernacular verses fit to be mentioned with those of our ancestors; or a theologian like Alcuin; or a philosopher like Johannes Scotus and the monk of Ramsey, the most learned Bridferth. Yet, though this pre-eminence is certainly due to them, it is perfectly consistent with a very general barbarism. If individuals, instigated whether by duty or the hope of reward, thus obtained an enduring distinction, the case

\* Vol. II. p. 251.

† Ibid. p. 265.

‡ Bede, *Incunabula Grammaticæ Artis, necnon De Octo Partibus Orationis* (Opera, tom. i.). Albinus *Dialectica*, p. 488., necnon *Grammatica*, p. 506. (apud Canisium, *Thesaurus Monumentorum*, tom. ii.). Ceillier, *Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques*, tom. xviii. p. 291. The dogmatic treatises of Alcuin are in the collection of his works by Duchesne; most of them are also in the *Magna Bibliotheca Patrum*.

was different in regard to the nation at large, which appears throughout to have been exceedingly barbarous,—as much so certainly as any other in Christian Europe. If a few ecclesiastics were learned, we know, from good authority, that the majority were illiterate; scarcely able, at some periods, to stammer out a service which they could not understand. It is, indeed, a singular fact, that while *those* were more learned than the most distinguished of their brethren in any other part of Europe, *these* were more ignorant than the lowest. And this fact is full of instruction: it proves that there was something exceedingly defective in the constitution of the Saxon mind; or, to speak more correctly, in the education, the habits, the associations, the civil and religious institutions of the nation. But we must hasten from this period to one brighter, and, though not more important, certainly more interesting.

## CHAP. IV.

RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND,  
FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE ACCESSION  
OF HENRY VII.

BENEFITS, BOTH INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS, RESULTING FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST. — NEW SPIRIT INFUSED INTO THE NATION. — LANFRANC. — ST. ANSELM. — DISPUTES BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL JURISDICTIONS. — ST. THOMAS À BECKET. — OPPRESSION AND RAPACITY OF THE CROWN UNDER HENRY II. AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS. — RAPACITY OF THE POPES. — ST. ROBERT. — ST. BARTHOLOMEW OF FARNE. — ST. GILBERT. — ST. AILRED. — LANGTON. — ST. EDMUND. — GROSSETESTE. — WYCLIFFE. — GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH. — GIRALDUS CAMBRENSIS. — LATIN POETS. — NORMAN POETS. — VERNACULÆ ROMANCES. — VERNACULÆ POETRY. — SCIENCE.

FOR the sake of clearness, no less than the natural connection of the subject, we shall divide the present chapter into three parts. We shall consider, I. The Church, and the writers who are purely ecclesiastical. II. Literature. III. Philosophy and Science. But these subjects are identical, and capable of classification not under three heads but one.

I. *The Church.*

No sooner had the Conqueror firmly seated himself on the throne of England, than, actuated as much by policy as revenge, — by the conviction that his Normans would be his best supporters, as from resentment to the opposition shown towards him by the native churchmen, — he began to displace the bishops and abbots, and to

to  
1070.

appoint his own creatures. For his dispossession of the temporal barons, the thanes, and even the more considerable of the freeholders, we can account: — he was at the head of a powerful army; he was invested with all the rights of conquest; he had the authority of a lord over his vassals. But to explain the facility with which he exercised the same violence over the church, — at a time, too, when that church was swayed by the councils of the great Hildebrand, — is not so easy. Overbearing as was the victor, he dared not, by his own unaided authority, venture on so bold a measure. In the view of reforming the church, he procured from pope Alexander II. (who had been devoted to, and who was directed by, Hildebrand) the mission of three legates, armed with full powers to effect that object. That a great, a universal reformation was wanted, is undoubted: on every side were to be seen immorality and ignorance; immorality which, in any other country, would have been scarcely tolerated in a layman; ignorance to which no other presented a parallel. Not only were the secular clergy, from their constant intercourse with the world, adepts in all the vices of the age, — not only, in the emphatic language of William of Malmesbury, were learning and religion grown obsolete, from the archbishop to the lowest parish priest, — but even the monks were become stupid and barbarous, ready to indulge in all the sensual vices, or the criminal amusements of the day. The prelates and abbots were the first to suffer for their vices or their ignorance. Stigand, the archbishop of Canterbury, had offended the king by refusing to crown him; and he had equally offended against the canons by attempting to annex the see of Winchester to the primacy, — a practice which appears to have been frequent enough from the time of St. Dunstan. To this we may add, that he was certainly illiterate; that he was simoniacal and avaricious; and that he had usurped the see of Canterbury, not only contrary to the canons, but in violation of common decency, by directing the anger of St. Edward to his

predecessor, whom he had succeeded in banishing. When cited to Rome to answer for his conduct, he had always contrived to find some evasion. Though suspended by a preceding pope, a bribe seasonably offered to the antipope, Benedict X., had procured his reinstatement. In short, however the circumstance may have been overlooked by modern historians, he was, doubtless, one of the worst prelates — probably one of the worst men — that ever sat on the ecclesiastical throne of Canterbury.\* His deposition, therefore, was demanded by the very interests of religion. In his place Lanfranc, an Italian by birth, and the abbot of St. Stephen's, at Caen, was appointed. This, beyond all doubt, was the best choice that could have been made; for Lanfranc was not only one of the most religious, he was also one of the wisest men of his age. From a school which he had opened at Avranches, from the monastery of Bec, where he had been prior, from that of St. Peter, which duke William had bestowed on him, he had diffused the rays of learning throughout the duchy. The good wrought by this one man is wonderful: he found the province barbarous, with not one able teacher to reclaim it: by his cares he had, at length, a hundred scholars, all taught by him, all ready to co-operate with him in the spread of civilisation. Lanfranc, whose humility was equal to his learning, and whose wisdom was equal to his piety, had earnestly declined the proffered dignity. One plea was his ignorance alike of the language and the manners of the barbarous people. He foresaw the difficulties with which he should have to contend; the universal de-

\* How comes this man to have been so leniently treated by all our historians? All seem to have overlooked the council of Winchester, where he was convicted of three heavy offences, and solemnly deposed: *In quo concilio, says Hoveden, Stigandus Doroberniæ archiepiscopus degradatus, tribus de causis; scil. quod episcopatum Wintoniæ cum archiepiscopatu injuste possidebat; quod vivente Roberto archiepiscopo (his predecessor), non solum archiepiscopatum sumpsit, sed etiam ejus pallio, quod Cantuariæ remansit, dum vi suâ injuste ab Anglia pulsus est, in missarum celebratione aliquando usus est; et a Benedicto, quum pecuniis sedem apostolicam invasit, pallium accepit.* Nor were these his only offences. Yet Stigand is praised, while the memory of Dunstan, whom all contemporary history represents as an excellent prelate, is followed by savage persecution.



generacy of the English clergy, who were, in fact, rapidly becoming laymen; the rapacity of the Norman nobles, who had already seized many domains of the church; and the imperious temper of William, whom it would often be his duty to oppose. For these, and other reasons, we need not wonder that an old man — he was even now fast approaching his eightieth year — should be reluctant to enter on so new and laborious a sphere of exertion. The authority, however, of the king, and the positive commands of the pope, induced him to accept the dignity. His first object was to reform the canons; to forbid clergymen from marrying, from engaging in secular occupations, from joining in frivolous amusements. His next was canonically to depose those who, whether mentally or morally, had not the requisite qualifications. Assisted by the legates, he deposed one dignitary for hunting and hawking; another for simony; a third for immorality; a few for ignorance: some, dreading the result, probably because they were implicated in the frequent insurrections of the times, fled into Scotland, and thereby left their sees or monasteries open for a new possessor. In all cases, the vacancies were supplied with learned and moral ecclesiastics from Normandy. “This measure,” says a modern historian\*, with great truth, “was an important addition to the civilisation of the island. No present can be greater to any country than that of a moral and lettered clergy; and from no other class of men does social improvement, or deterioration, more certainly flow. Their natural influence is that of mind, virtue, and piety, wherever these mark their character; and it is an influence ever loved and welcomed, when these invaluable qualities really exist to create it. The improvements which gradually flowed from the Norman ecclesiastics spread through England a new spirit of knowledge and propriety.” In reality, no change was ever so beneficial as that which transferred the sceptre from the Saxon to the Norman line, the ministry of

\* Mr. Turner.

the altar from idle, and ignorant, and immoral natives, to a learned, a pious, and a zealous foreign clergy. But, if so much good were effected, it was not unmixed. The king's chief motive in pushing the change with an unbecoming violence was, certainly, not the good of religion, — though, to do him justice, he seldom conferred a benefice on an improper person, — but the less honourable policy to which we have adverted. And it is certain that he exercised too much influence over the legates: he persuaded them to enter with more precipitation than justice into his views; to displace some ecclesiastics who were doubtless pure from the contagion of the times. There is reason to believe that, when dignitaries of unblemished lives were thus removed, it was because they were found deficient in the attainments required by their station; but we may doubt whether, at such a period, the plea was a sufficient one. In one case both Lanfranc and the king were compelled to desist from their purpose. St. Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, like all his countrymen, certainly possessed of little acquired learning, was yet the most virtuous prelate of his nation. When summoned before Lanfranc and a synod, held in Westminster Abbey, to deliver up his pastoral staff, he replied: — “Of a surety do I know, my lord archbishop, that I am not worthy of this dignity, nor equal to its duties: this I knew when the clergy elected, when the prelates compelled, when my master summoned me to it. By the authority of the apostolic see he laid the burden upon my shoulders: with this staff he ordered me to receive the episcopal grade. You now require from me the pastoral staff, which you did not deliver, and to take from me the office which you did not confer. Acquainted with my own insufficiency, and obedient to the decree of this holy synod, I resign that staff and this office — not unto you, but to him by whose authority I received them!” The venerable old man then drew near to the tomb of St. Edward, and exclaimed, — “Master, thou knowest how unwillingly I

assumed this charge when constrained by thee; for, though the choice of the brethren, the desire of the people, the consent of the prelates, and the favour of the nobles were with me, yet was it thy pleasure which more than all compelled me. Now have we a new king, a new primate, with new rights and statutes. Thee they accuse of error in having so commanded; me of presumption in having obeyed. Formerly, indeed, thou wast liable to err, because thou wast mortal; but now thou art with God, and cannot err! Not, therefore, to those who revoke what they have not bestowed, and who may deceive as well as be deceived, but to thee, who didst bestow it, and who art now raised far above either error or ignorance, I surrender my crosier! to thee alone do I resign the care of the flock which thou hast committed to my charge!" So saying, he laid his staff on the tomb of the confessor, and immediately took his place, as a simple monk, among his brethren. There needed not the legend that it was instantly so fast imbedded in the stone that it could not be moved: the appeal alone was sufficient to make the synod respect his character, and to decree that he should retain his bishopric. St. Wulfstan appears to have been the only native prelate thus favoured: certainly, he was the only Englishman who, at William's death, held the episcopal dignity.\*

1070 In every respect the administration of the English  
to church by Lanfranc was beneficial to the nation. He  
1089. forced the lawless Norman barons to release the church  
plunder which they held in their grasp. Thus, when  
Odo, the bastard brother of William, had annexed to  
his own ample possessions five and twenty manors be-  
longing to the church of Canterbury, the primate ap-

\* Eadmerus, *Historia Novorum*, p. 4—14. *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis*, *De Pontificibus*, lib. iv. Wilkins, *Concilia*, tom. i. p. 322. Milo Crispinus, *Vita B. Lanfranci* (apud Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ord. S. Ben.* tom. x.) Bollandistæ, *Acta SS.* tom. vi. *Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis*, *Vita S. Wulfstani* (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. p. 244., necnon apud Mabillon, *Acta SS. Ben.* tom. x.). Parker *De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ Britannicæ*, p. 110. Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, tom. iii. Southey, *Book of the Church*, vol. i.

pealed to the laws, and, after a public trial on Pennenden Heath, obtained their restoration. The joy of the tenantry on this occasion proves beyond all dispute the easy liberality of the church as a landlord, when contrasted with the rapacity of the lay proprietors. On all occasions he was ready to interfere in behalf of the oppressed natives; and he frequently obtained from the justice of the crown a revival of obnoxious acts. It is honourable to William's memory that he paid so much attention to one who would never flatter him—nay, who would reprove him with the same freedom as any other man. Thus, when a minstrel, in the exercise of his art, one day, in Lanfranc's presence, ventured to use some adulatory expressions concerning the monarch, the primate called on the king not to allow such base servility; and the poet received stripes instead of a reward. At Canterbury the archbishop built two houses of entertainment for the poor, the sick, and the stranger: he rebuilt the cathedral with Norman stone; he founded many other cathedrals, and many monasteries, and he repaired more. He transferred several episcopal sees from places which had now become of inferior importance to others which had risen into consideration,—a policy as enlightened as it was liberal, but seldom imitated. For the reformation of the monks he drew up a code of institutions chiefly based on the rule of the Italians, and the collections of the French Benedict\*, and still more, perhaps, on the observance of Corbey. The monastic order, thus improved, became a blessing to the nation. Not only were charity exercised, agriculture extended, religion and morality inculcated, the neighbourhood kept in peace, but, as schools were opened in every diocese, civilisation was rapidly and widely diffused throughout the country. To this noble object the native monks were wholly inadequate: it was the work of the Normans, and of other foreigners whom the Normans invited to aid them. Over the monasteries thus improved especial care was taken to

\* St. Benedict of Aniana. See a sketch of him in the first volume.

place learned and zealous superiors, who might impart the best impulse to the inferior functionaries. By William of Malmesbury many, whose names he mentions, are highly praised for their attainments, their piety, and their zeal. Not only did they give a new impulse to letters, they no less encouraged the progress of the elegant than of the useful arts—of architecture, sculpture, painting, and music, no less than of agriculture. The only use which the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, from the reign of Alfred to the Conquest, made of riches, was to employ them in gratifying the brute pleasures of our nature; while the Normans applied all their resources to the erection of great public edifices, to the support of schools, to the acquisition of books, to the endowment of hospitals—to every thing that could increase the comforts no less than the magnificence of life. Every cathedral and every monastery had a public school; and, where funds could not immediately be found for the erection or endowment of one, barns were selected for the purpose, where the teachers gratuitously attended. Of this fact we have a striking illustration in the conduct of Joffred, abbot of Croyland (the successor of Ingulf); who despatched colonies of his monks to his different manors, to preach and instruct wherever they could.' Thus, on the manor of Cotenham, near Cambridge, four monks (of course Normans) from that establishment hired a public granary at Cambridge, and there invited all who chose to attend their lessons, not merely in religion, but in general literature and the sciences. In one year they had a considerable number of students; in two, neither the barn nor the largest church could contain those who flocked to them. To accommodate all, the four professors separated their labours, each taking his turn, at a different hour of the day, to receive a different class of learners. In the morning, one brother instructed his class in the Latin language and literature; at a later hour, another lectured on Aristotle, according to the interpretations of Porphyry and Averroes; a third on rhetoric, from

Cicero and Quintilian ; while a fourth, on certain days, expounded the Scriptures from the comments of the fathers. This pleasing anecdote is very characteristic of the Normans : it shows at once their learning, their ardour, and their disinterestedness. Well does William of Malmesbury describe them as a people, when he says that “ they are emulous of their equals : they strive to surpass their superiors. They are faithful to their masters ; whom, however, they will abandon on the least offence. The most kind-hearted of men, they treat strangers with the same respect as themselves. They marry with their inferiors. Since their arrival in England, they may be said to have raised religion from the dead.” In every thing the native Saxons were opposite to this high-minded people ; but the example of the invaders at length roused them from the degradation of beasts, to something like the dignity of men. From the whole tenour of our ancient history, we cannot hesitate to avow that the greatest blessing which ever befel the country, was its entire subjugation by a foreign enemy. What else, indeed, could be expected where the monks were now as attached, as they had formerly been indifferent, to the noblest mental pursuits ? The conqueror uniformly patronised them ; and for his son Henry, he procured the best education of the age. \* This latter prince, who has been surnamed *le Beau Clerc*, or the *Fine Scholar*, well deserves that noble distinction. From the evidence of one who knew him intimately, we learn that neither wars nor state affairs could withdraw him from literary pursuits ; that in them he made much of his glory to consist ; that he not only patronised, but conversed with men of letters, however humble in circumstances ; that his two queens—whether instigated by his example, or chosen because of their acquirements—were distinguished for the same taste. The new prelates and abbots were studious to emulate him : they multiplied MSS. by transcription to an amazing extent, which were not merely allowed to be consulted, but were lent, under certain necessary restrictions, to schools and

students.—The advantages of the Conquest were immediate. To Lanfranc, above all, he ascribed the praise of having revised both religion and learning; of having laid the foundation of their universal diffusion; of having been the instrument of more good than was, perhaps, ever effected by any individual in our history. Many of his successors have exceeded him in learning; many have had greater talents, both natural and acquired; but none ever more sincerely or successfully endeavoured to promote the best interests of the people committed to his charge. He not only befriended religion and literature, but humanity. Through his representations the Conqueror was induced to forego the traffic, to Ireland, in slaves; and his private charities were boundless. It may, indeed, be said, that he sacrificed, in some measure, the independence of the English, by strenuously supporting the pretensions of the papal see, in their most extended sense, as urged by Gregory VII.; but, if we allow for the difficulties in which he was placed, we shall perceive that he had no other alternative. His own influence was insufficient to protect religion against the perpetual encroachments of a powerful monarch: he saw that the Norman policy was to subject the church to the same dependence on the throne as the state itself. William I. had already forbidden any pope to be recognised, or any letters from Rome to be received in his dominions, without his previous consent; without the same license he had forbidden the decrees of national or provincial councils to be carried into effect: nor even would he allow any tenant in capite of the crown to be prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts until the nature of the offence had been communicated to him.\* The lengths to which he carried the royal prerogatives appear to have proceeded from the indignation he felt at the absurd demand of Gregory,—that he should do homage to the holy see for the kingdom he had conquered. Such a message to one

\* For the separation of the ecclesiastical and civil courts, which, under the Saxons, were united, see Vol. III. p. 104.

who contemplated the complete subserviency of the English prelates to his will, must have been irritating. He returned a firm answer, that none of his predecessors had done such homage, and that he would not. Hence the jealousy which he evidently entertained of the Roman court, and the care with which he laboured to fortify the kingly power; and as one extreme inevitably leads to another, he did not scruple, in the manner we have related, to invade the just rights of the church. Farther he would, doubtless, have proceeded, but for the opposition of Lanfranc, who united great prudence with great firmness, and who fortunately possessed great ascendancy over him. But that ascendancy would not always have sufficed, had he not called to its aid the authority of the pope. If the monarch sometimes defied the archbishop, who was his own vassal, he had no wish to provoke the wrath of a pontiff, who was more than a match for the powerful chief of the Germanic empire.\* Yet, but for the contest which raged so fiercely between the two heads of Christendom, he could scarcely have avoided it; nor can there be a doubt that, like Henry, he would have been compelled to submit. But though the king was thus kept in stricter bounds than his disposition rendered agreeable, Lanfranc was weary of his post, which he felt to be unenviable, and from which he vainly wished the pope to relieve him. But he was too useful to be removed,—a removal wished by no party. After all, however, there was much good in the Conqueror's character: by the pope he is praised for not exposing to sale, like other kings, the vacant abbeys and bishoprics, and for consulting the chapters as to the proper choice of a successor. He was, in general, swayed by conscience; and when betrayed, as he frequently was, into acts of violence, he could be persuaded to make atonement for them. Hence it was that Lanfranc, in a letter to the pope, observed that, whatever were that monarch's defects, the church ought to pray for his prolonged life. William Rufus,

\* See Vol. I. p. 158.



whose character the prelate well knew, and whom in penning that epistle he had evidently in view, was indeed, as we shall soon perceive, a very different man. Such, nowever, was Lanfranc's influence, that during his life he avoided a collision between the temporal and spiritual powers; but in four years he followed the Conqueror to the tomb. Of his works, consisting of epistles, a monastic rule, a treatise against Berengarius, and other opuscula, we are not disposed to say much; their character will not allow of extracts, nor would the subjects interest any one in these times. His reading was extensive; his judgment was sober; his acuteness remarkable; his style plain but elegant; and he was better versed in the scriptures and the fathers than any prelate of his age. But in subtlety or range of intellect, or even in learning, he is not to be compared with some of his immediate successors. It is rather as a patron of letters than as a writer, that he is entitled to our gratitude, and that gratitude he must command so long as learning and religion are valued among us.\*

1089 The death of Lanfranc was a severe misfortune to  
to England. Rufus, no longer awed by the councils of  
1093. that able and virtuous man, plunged into the most criminal excesses. So that his coffers were replenished to supply his prodigalities, little cared he by what means; nor would he have hesitated to sacrifice the whole nation to his sensual indulgences. His favourite minister was a Norman clergyman, Ralf, afterwards surnamed Flam-bard, or the devouring torch, a man of low birth, of dissolute morals, ambitious, witty, unprincipled, and wholly unscrupulous as to the means by which he attained his objects. During the earlier part of the Conqueror's reign, he appears to have filled the honourable office of a spy: subsequently he entered into the service of the bishop of London, where he had opportunities

\* Authorities;—Milo Crispinus, *Vita B. Lanfranci*.—Opera B. Lanfranci—Ingulphus *Croylandensis, Historia*.—Wilhelmus *Malmesburiensis, De Regibus Angliæ*, necnon *De Pontificibus*.—Eadmerus.—Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*; cum multis aliis in multis locis.

of attracting the notice of William Rufus. Two such men could not fail, from the congeniality of their dispositions, to become intimate. Stationed as chaplain in that prince's household, on the death of Lanfranc he was made treasurer and justiciary; in other words, prime minister of the kingdom. In this post his only object, because his only interest, was to raise money for his master. As the penal code consisted almost entirely of fines, his first care was to double or treble them; to multiply crimes; and even when the capital punishment was incurred, to accept a pecuniary compensation. His next was to order a new survey of all the lands in England, to ascertain what number of hydes had been brought into cultivation since the original survey by his father, and to make them liable to the land-tax, estimated at so much per hyde; and as this tax varied according to the actual state of cultivation on each estate, as agriculture had greatly improved, the impost on most was raised. From this twofold source the royal revenues were greatly augmented, to the dissatisfaction of the whole realm. But even these were insufficient; and nothing remained but to plunder the church—a step which, as Lanfranc was no more, might, it was hoped, be taken with safety. On the death of a bishop or abbot, the care of the temporalities during the vacancy had always devolved on some other bishop, or the metropolitan, until the Conqueror nominated some clergyman to the temporary charge, who should render a strict account of his administration to the next dignitary. It was obvious that if these revenues, during each vacation, could be administered for the benefit of the crown, and if these vacancies could be indefinitely prolonged, most of the vast property of the church would soon find its way into the royal exchequer. Hence Flambard boldly advised the king to seize the revenues during every vacancy; nor was he wanting in sophistry to defend the measure. He observed that prelacies, whether bishoprics or abbacies, were, as regarded their temporalities, no less fiefs of the crown

than those which were granted to lay barons. Now, as, on the death of a temporal vassal, the fief reverted to the original donor, and was not regranted to the heir without a heavy fine, under the name of a relief \*, why should not the same policy be enforced in regard to the church feudatories? Accordingly, every vacant prelacy was instantly placed under the administration of officers appointed by the crown; and the revenues flowed into the exchequer without interruption. A small allowance only was left to the monks or the chapter—so small, that it was generally insufficient for their support. To make the most of these was the minister's object. The lands, with the various prestations, rights, and revenues under the feudal system, were often let by public auction to the highest bidder. The new tenant could not know how short the period which might be allowed him to profit by his bargain; and it was manifestly his interest to make his returns as considerable and as sudden as possible. Hence the extortions practised on the sub-tenants, the real occupiers of the ground, who were often reduced to a frightful state of destitution: hence the dilapidations of the monasteries, churches, and habitations, both of the ecclesiastics and of their vassals. The whole often exhibited a scene of wretchedness appalling to the eye; the clergy themselves often being compelled to subsist on the most precarious of all sources—the charity of strangers. The advantages accruing from this accursed policy were found to be so considerable, that they were not easily surrendered. The bishoprics and abbeys were thus kept vacant for years; and when at last a successor was reluctantly nominated, he was compelled to pay into the exchequer a sum proportionate to the value of the dignity. That the minister who had invented these tyrannical claims should be detested by the whole nation, was to be expected. Projects were formed for his destruction; and to one he was near falling a victim. Walking one morning on the banks of the Thames, a waterman,

\* See Vol. III. p. 102.

who had been formerly in his service, approached in a boat, and told him that the bishop of London, being at the point of death, much desired to see him. Flambard unsuspectingly stepped into the boat, was rowed down the river, and forced on board a ship, which immediately proceeded to sea. A storm arose ; some of those who had engaged to murder him, became afraid ; his promises induced a part of them to put him on shore : so that in three days he reappeared at court, to the terror of his enemies. To console him, the king gave him the bishopric of Durham, but not without, what we may call, the ecclesiastical relief — a present of 1000*l*. When this worthless prelate was appointed, the see of Durham had for some time been vacant ; it would have continued so for many years longer but for his favour with the king. Many other benefices William refused to fill up. Among them was Canterbury, which had been vacant four years ; and which he declared should have no archbishop but himself while he lived. There can be no doubt that his threat would have been verified ; that half the cathedrals and monasteries in the kingdom would have been without prelates, — for at this time there was a schism in the popedom, — had not the monarch been assailed by a serious fit of illness. In his alarm he released many prisoners ; restored to several churches and monasteries the manors which he had usurped from them ; forgave all offences against the crown ; and promised amendment of life, should God restore him to health. At this season the bishops who surrounded his sick-bed, had little difficulty in persuading him to nominate a successor to Lanfranc, and his choice fell on Anselm, abbot of Bec in Normandy, who happened to be present, and whom Lanfranc himself had expressly recommended for his successor. The intimation was a sorrowful one to the abbot, who well knew the character of the king, and who had no wish to pass his declining years in perpetual disputes with so fierce and unprincipled a tyrant. He refused the dignity ; but in vain. He was dragged

to the bed of Rufus; a crosier was forced into his hands; and *Te Deum* was chanted in thanksgiving for the event. The new archbishop protested that his election was illegal; that he was not the subject of Rufus, but of Robert duke of Normandy. Both Robert, however, and the archbishop of Rouen, ordered him to remain in the dignity; and his friends, at length, persuaded him that the interests of religion required his compliance.\*

1033 to 1093. *St. Anselm* was by birth an Italian, and born in the year 1033. Having lost his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, and being treated with severity by a harsh father, he precipitately left his home, and passed into France. There the fame of Lanfranc, prior of Bec, drew him into Normandy. The ardour with which he applied to study soon gained him the favour of his master; nor did he long hesitate to assume the cowl in that monastery. In a few years, Lanfranc being placed over the new foundation of Caen, the priorship of Bec was given to Anselm. His elevation at so early an age as twenty-seven, gave great offence to the older monks; who, though they were compelled to bend before the authority of their abbot Herluin, were not slow to form a faction against him. His manners, however, were so mild; that he disarmed the most bitter of his opponents, and in reality turned dislike into affection. He had no wish for the dignity, which, as he truly said, distracted his mind from study, and his heart from constant communion with God; and he applied to the archbishop of Rouen for a release from the unwelcome burden. But the prelate, who knew that the men most anxious to escape dignities are the fittest to fill them, refused his request, and read him a lecture on the duties which he owed to others — duties far more

\* Eadmerus, *Historia Novorum*, p. 15—19., necnon *Vita S. Anselmi* (apud Bollandistas, *Acta Sanctorum*, Die Aprilis xxi.). Johannes Carnotensis, *Vita ejusdem* (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii.). Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Gestis Pontificum*, p. 218., necnon *De Regibus*, p. 69. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia*, p. 678—682. Ingulphus Croylandensis, *cum Continuazione Petri Blesensis*, p. 16—111.

agreeable to Heaven than even that of self-improvement. Without receiving the absurd, however harmless legends which Eadmer collected respecting his conventional life, we may believe that it was in every respect exemplary. He is particularly praised for the charity with which he sought the infirmary; for the tender care with which he prescribed for the bodily, no less than the spiritual ailments of his brethren. Thus passed his life, useful to himself as well as to others; for whatever might be his anxiety to benefit mankind, he never lost sight of his studies. All the hours which he could abstract from his higher duties, he passed in contemplation, or in the composition of books. On the death of the abbot Herluin, the community cast their eyes on him as the successor. That he was loth to accept the office, we may readily believe; since it would inevitably cast a greater load on his shoulders than the one he had so reluctantly borne. On his knees he is said to have besought them to desist from their purpose; to elect some other monk in his stead; but they were too well acquainted with his virtues to hear him, and in the sequel he was compelled to sacrifice his own will to theirs. A better abbot could not have been found. The taste for learning which Lanfranc had been so diligent to create, he considerably fortified, thus spreading the renown of his monastery throughout Europe. His liberality to the poor, who were daily fed in the hospitium, was so great — not unfrequently he persuaded his monks to send from their own table the untouched viands — that there was reason to apprehend a famine. But he exhorted all to confidence in God; and his biographers tell us that immediately after such assurances, either a vessel would arrive from England with provisions, or some rich noble would visit the monastery, and leave a memorial of his benevolence. That the fame of such a man should be widely diffused, need not surprise us. His old friend Lanfranc, whom he visited at Canterbury, regarded him as the only man fitted to succeed him in so arduous a trust; and it was doubt-

less owing to his recommendation that Rufus, in his momentary repentance, remembered that he was nominated to that high dignity. "You know not what you are doing," said he to the prelates who forced him to accept it; "you are joining to the same plough a feeble old sheep with a wild bull."\*

1093      The vexations which Anselm had foreseen soon  
to      arrived. No sooner did the king feel that he should  
1100.      recover than he revoked the pardons he had granted, reclaimed the debts which he had forgiven, detained his prisoners, and reverted to his former tyrannical acts. Of his detestable immorality the strongest language is used by contemporary writers: it outraged all decency; and his example being imitated by his youthful courtiers, made his court the abode of the most disgusting debauchery.† Before Anselm would do homage to such a monster, or receive the episcopal consecration, he allowed some months to elapse. But other circumstances also tended to this delay. It was his first duty to procure the restoration of the manors which had been severed from the church; but to his applications, an evasive answer or a positive refusal was returned — evasions as regarded those of Canterbury, but explicit enough as regarded those of other churches or monasteries. When he entreated the king to nominate suitable persons to the vacant abbeys, Rufus demanded, "What concern is this of yours? Are not the abbeys mine? Do what you please with your own farms, and allow me to do what I please with my abbeys!" No words could more clearly evince the monarch's determination to render the altar the obsequious handmaid of the throne. In fact, the very day Anselm entered Canterbury, proceedings were instituted against him in the king's name by the notorious Flambard for some im-

\* Eadmerus, Vita S. Anselmi, lib. i. cap. 1—6 (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, Die Aprilis xxi. p. 856—878.). Johannes Carnotensis, Vita ejusdem apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, tom. ii. p. 155—163.).

† Luxuriæ scelus tacendum exercebat, non occulto, sed ex impudentia coram sole.—*Huntingdon*, p. 216. Nefandissimum Sodomæ scelus *noviter* in hac terra divulgatum, jam plurimum pullulavit, multosque suâ immunitate fœderit.—*Eadmer*, p. 24. This *noviter* is worthy of consideration.

puted breach of the royal prerogative: his tenants were constrained to pay their rents into the exchequer; and the persons to whom William had sold the manors were encouraged to retain them. Yet, though by these and other vexatious proceedings the primate was reduced to such poverty that he could not support a household, and that for the very necessaries of life he was indebted to the abbot of St. Albans; he was commanded, in accordance with the system of Flambard, to raise a sum for the king, proportionate to the value of his benefice. With much difficulty he collected 500*l.*, which was rejected as insufficient. Anselm is to be severely blamed for this criminal condescension to the tyrant's rapacity: by complying, however reluctantly, with the newly raised demand, he was leaving a fatal example to other prelates; he was authorising the most ruinous simony, and subjecting the ecclesiastical tenants, on whom the burden of the contribution must ultimately fall throughout the realm, to the oppressive exactions of all new dignitaries. It may, indeed, be urged in his excuse, that as the schism of the popedom was pending, he had no superior whom he could invoke to his aid; but this is a poor justification. The truth is, he was for a moment constrained by what he doubtless at the time regarded as mere prudence: but his better reason appears soon to have returned; for scarcely had he left the royal presence, where his money had been so contemptuously rejected, when he distributed the whole of it to the poor. Another cause of his disgrace was the freedom with which he reproved the flagitious conduct of the king: had he, like the more prudent of his brethren, looked indifferently on it, he would doubtless have been a favourite: for the relation of Eadmer distinctly implies that from the moment he assumed the duty of monition, he was beheld with dislike. William, however, could not dispense with money, and it was whispered to the archbishop, that if he would offer 1000*l.* instead of 500*l.*, he would regain the smiles of royalty. This time he was not



wanting to himself or to his dignity : he declared that he had no money, and that his vassals were too much impoverished by the exactions of the royal officers to be able to furnish him with any.\* When this answer was reported to the king, his rage knew no bounds. " I hated him yesterday ; to-day I hate him more ; and the feeling shall increase so long as I live." In this state of contention, Anselm asked permission to leave the realm, and hasten to Rome to receive the pallium from the hands of pope Urban II. Here was another offence : England had not yet decided which of the competitors should be recognised as the legitimate successor of Gregory VII. ; and Anselm, whatever his own opinion might be, had clearly no right to recognise either without the consent of his brethren the English prelates. But if he were thus censurable, what shall we say of the king, who affected to regard this recognition as the peculiar privilege of English monarchs ? To deprive him of this privilege was, he asserted, to deprive him of his crown. In a parliament held at Rockingham, the bishops of England took part with the king, evidently because they condemned the premature recognition of Urban by the archbishop ; and they showed a bitterness of feeling against their lawful head, which proves the ascendancy already gained by the crown over the church. Such ascendancy was inevitable : where there is any thing to be expected from a court, ecclesiastics know the way to royal favour quite as well as their lay brethren. It was evidently intended, either that he should resign his pastoral staff, or abjure the authority of Urban ; and when he refused to do either, he was assailed with clamour little becoming the prelatial character. Seeing their dissension, the king ordered them to depose him. They replied, that to do so was beyond their power ; but they consented to

\* " Anselm was unwise enough to refuse."—*Turner*, i. 154. This expression will show the spirit in which the dispute is related by this historian. Most of the blame is thrown on the archbishop. We too, severely condemn Anselm, but for reasons somewhat different from those which call forth the animadversions of Mr. Turner.

abjure his authority. Some abjured it unconditionally, and these the king called his friends; others, because of his premature recognition of Urban, and these lost the royal favour, which they could not regain without a present. Of all the English bishops, one only, he of Rochester, refused to comply in the one way or the other with the king's will. This fact is full of melancholy instruction; the reader may draw his own inference from it, especially when contrasted with another equally remarkable — that the lay barons would not imitate the subserviency of the prelates.\* Though in the sequel William acknowledged Urban, his hostility to the archbishop remained undiminished. It was impossible for the two to live on amicable terms. The former not only kept the benefices vacant, and retained possession of the manors usurped from the church, but on every occasion he appeared to take peculiar pleasure in thwarting the purposes of Anselm. In the affliction of his heart, the latter requested permission to visit Rome. The request was refused. It was repeated; and he was at length told that he might go, but if he did his revenues would certainly be sequestered. The threat did not make him desist from the resolution he had taken; even when deprived of the money necessary for the expenses of his journey, he persevered, declaring that with a pilgrim's staff he would, if necessary, travel to the eternal city rather than remain where he was. He felt that he could no longer be useful; and he anxiously wished to be released by the papal authority from the responsibility of his situation. In a letter to Urban, he well explains the reasons of this step: —

“The king would not restore to my church the lands belonging to it which after Lanfranc's death he had given away; he even continued, notwithstanding my resistance, to give more away: he required from me grievous services, which none of my predecessors had been required to discharge; and by

\* That churchmen can be as subservient now as formerly, see proof enough in the Rev. George Townsend's "Accusations of History against the Church of Rome," p. 81, &c.

customs of his own creation he annulled the law of God, with the canonical and apostolical decisions. In such conduct I could not acquiesce without the loss of my soul. To plead against him in his own court was vain; for no one dared to advise or to assist me. This is my object in coming to you, — to beg that you will release me from the bondage of the episcopal dignity, and allow me again to serve God in the tranquillity of my cell; and that you will provide for the English church, so as may seem fit to your wisdom and the authority of your station.”

At Dover, Anselm was insulted by the royal officers; but for this mortification he was amply repaid by the attentions he received in France and Italy. The Roman court was sufficiently inclined to excommunicate the king; but this decree was arrested by the archbishop, who probably thought that it would only tend to the greater persecution of the English church.\*

- 1100 On the accession of Henry I. the primate was re-  
to called. The acts of usurpers are always popular; and  
1135. Henry was as anxious to ingratiate himself with the  
church as with the people. He granted many favourable  
charters, and engaged that prelacies should no longer  
be kept vacant, or money received for future benefices;  
but the moment he found that his throne was secure,  
he was little disposed to remember his promises. Dur-  
ing his absence Anselm had assisted at two councils  
where the everlasting subject of the investitures had  
been discussed; and he returned with a renewed deter-  
mination to support the ancient rights of the church.  
The privilege assumed by sovereigns and feudal super-  
iors of nominating to vacant ecclesiastical dignities he  
justly considered as fatal to the interests of religion,  
as an odious innovation on the economy of the earliest  
and best ages of the church. But his zeal went too  
far. Indignant at the conduct of the late king, and  
eager to follow the new maxims of the Roman court, he

\* Eadmerus, *Vita S. Anselmi*. — Johannes Carnotensis, *Vita ejusdem*. — Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Regibus, necnon De Pontificibus*. — Bollandista, *Acta Sanctorum*. — Ordericus Vitalis, as before cited. To these must be added, St. Anselm's Epistles, contained in the chief editions of his works, and Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, tom. iii.

was even averse to the prerogative of investiture by sovereigns, — a prerogative which, in its exercise, would do no harm, provided the dignitary were not nominated or recommended by the crown, but elected by the unbiassed suffrages of the clergy and people. But such suffrages were, in fact, never unbiassed: from the first, if the bishop or abbot were disagreeable to the king, the chapter was ordered to proceed to a new election. This right of veto naturally led to recommendation, or to a direct nomination; and this in its turn to the sale of vacant benefices, where the highest bidder, no matter what his disqualifications, was sure to triumph. On his first interview with Henry, Anselm declared his resolution to restore the ancient rights of the church. The monarch, though resolved to retain the most obnoxious clauses introduced by his brother, temporised; his brother, Robert of Normandy, was in arms; and he had no wish to have the pope and the clergy against him. To gain time, a negotiation was opened with the Roman court, and, to hasten a satisfactory conclusion, the archbishop himself, at the king's request, old and infirm as he was, undertook a journey to the eternal city; but on his return, when Robert was in safe custody, he received an order to remain in exile until he should sanction the pretensions of the crown. At Lyons he remained three years; during his absence, his flock, the whole church of England, was a prey to royal rapacity; but when the advisers of Henry were excommunicated, and he was informed that in a few weeks the same doom would be pronounced against himself, he consented to a reconciliation with the primate. Both met at the monastery of Bec, and both, in the hope of peace, promised to surrender a part of their pretensions. Henry engaged not to keep dignities vacant, nor to invest with ring and crosier. Anselm agreed that, before the temporalities were received, such churchman elect should take the oaths of fealty and homage. But the real evil, the nomination by the crown to vacant dignities, remained untouched. The revenues during

each vacancy, the king, whatever his promises, was resolved to appropriate to his own use; and he was equally resolved to prolong each vacancy, unless an adequate sum were offered for the prelacy. The only advantage, — if advantage it may be called, — which was gained, was that of time; evidently the great struggle must one day come: and it could not fail to be ultimately in favour of the crown. Of this monarch's duplicity in his engagement with Anselm we have proof enough from his subsequent conduct. The sees of Norwich and Ely he kept vacant three years; those of Canterbury, Durham, and Hereford, five. For the see of Winchester, which he conferred on his chancellor, he exacted 800 marks; for that of Lichfield, 300; and his demands were so high for the monastery of Tewkesbury, that the abbot whom he had nominated was unable to raise the money, and was, consequently, compelled to resign the dignity. For this species of rapacity he had precedents enough, both in the reign of his late brother, and in the system of most Christian princes on the Continent; but in one mode of extracting money from ecclesiastics, Henry Beauclerk may lay claim to originality. The celibacy of the clergy, owing to the disorders which attended the invasions of the Danes, and that of the Normans, could not wholly be enforced by Lanfranc; clerical marriages, in fact, were so common, that to depose all who had contracted them, would have deprived the altar of a great majority of its ministers; and to force them to put away their wives was found to be impracticable. In 1075, the synod of Winchester allowed those of inferior grade, who were located in the rural districts, to retain their wives; while, from the higher ranks, and still more naturally from the conventual order, this indulgence was withheld; and it was at the same time enacted, that every future candidate for the office of deacon or priest should take the vow of continency. In twenty-six years, another synod convened at Westminster by Anselm extended the same obligation to sub-deacons. The

king hoped that many would be found, who, since the meeting of the former synod, had violated the prohibition; and, with the view of profiting by the delinquency, he appointed a commission to enquire into the cases, and in every one to enforce a heavy fine. The sum thus raised, however, was too inconsiderable to satisfy him,—a proof that the regulation had been very generally observed—but as he was resolved to have money in some way, he levied a fine on the whole body of the parochial clergy, without the slightest regard to their guilt or innocence. This arbitrary impost is said to have been collected with exceeding harshness; many clergymen could not, in their conscience, sanction so monstrous an innovation, while many others were too poor to pay it. Both were imprisoned, or tortured, or exiled. Some years afterwards the bishops requested him to interpose his royal authority for the enforcement of clerical celibacy; he promised his support, and characteristically enough proclaimed, that any clerk who could afford to purchase a licence might have the indulgence of a wife. In these transactions there is something exceedingly ludicrous: few will be inclined to pity the bishops for being thus duped in their attempts to enforce an impolitic regulation.\*

Before many of these events happened, which, for 1109, the sake of connection, we have continued to the close of Henry's reign, Anselm was no more; he died in 1109, twenty-six years before that monarch. He was evidently unable to contend with a prince of equal cunning and violence. But his most effectual opponents were his own suffragan bishops, who, as men dependent on the crown always did and always will, invariably took part with the king. Had not William Rufus and Henry I. found the bishops characteristically supple, it is absurd to suppose that either monarch would have

\* Authorities;—Eadmerus, *Vita S. Anselmi*, necnon *Historia Novorum*.—Wilhelmus Malmesburiensis, *De Regibus*, necnon *De Pontificibus*.—Johannes Carnotensis, *Vita S. Anselmi*.—*Chronicon Saxonicum*.—*Bollandiste*, *Acta Sanctorum*.—Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, and some others, in places too numerous to admit of exact reference.

been able to make such inroads on the discipline of the church, on the purity of religion, and eventually on public morals. If he was willing to sell, his ecclesiastics were equally willing to buy, every vacant dignity; and even in his efforts to retain the revenues so long as suited his own views, he was strenuously supported by the English bishops, and was thus enabled to triumph over the opposition of Anselm and the popes. These two reigns, as we before intimated, are in this respect full of instruction. Ever since sovereigns were allowed to have any voice in the election of ecclesiastical dignitaries, especially ever since the feudal system was introduced, when bishops became temporal barons, such bishops have in all countries — we do not speak lightly — been traitors to religion. In a degree far beyond temporal feudatories have they proved themselves the instruments of the royal will, — ready for any work, however base, however injurious to the interests of their country, of the church, of faith, and morals. Their superior suppleness is sufficiently explicable from their superior dependence on the favour of princes; they could not win lordships or honours by the sword; but they might obtain them by flattery, — by a guilty condescension with kingly vices: a smooth tongue and a smiling brow are better than the sharpest weapon. If legislators were not generally as ignorant of history as they are of human nature, and if their honesty were not on a par with their knowledge, they would long since have found a place in the penal code for courtier bishops; they would have shut the palace of the king and the antechamber of the ministry to every ecclesiastic. The more we read history the more we perceive, that if science be progressive, wisdom is not; that men do not profit by the lessons of experience, — doubtless because these lessons are not sufficiently consulted. Until ecclesiastics are wholly removed from the sphere of royal influence, in no country will religion or morality flourish; in none will the church fulfil the purposes of its institution. But, while thus reprobating the conduct of

kings and bishops, let us not blame the *dignities* but the *men*; nor forget that human nature alone is in fault. Our virtue is the creature of circumstances; and if these circumstances are unfavourable to its growth, wisdom requires their correction. When bishops are no longer nominated, or, what is equally bad, translated from one see to another, by the crown; when they have nothing to hope or fear from it, they will seldom be seen in the palaces of kings. But where is this reformation to originate? The experience of all Christian history proves, that it must not be expected from the church itself.\* Not Lanfranc, with all his firmness, not Anselm, with all his talents, not Gregory VII., with all his genius, or all his authority, has been able to effect it. And it need not be expected from kings, or the ministers of kings, who, while strength is left them, will cling to any corruption which perpetuates their influence. In popular governments it must come from the people themselves, through their representatives. The only danger — and it is a fearful one — which the sober patriot, unbiassed by party or passion, has to apprehend, is lest this power, unable to distinguish the advantages from the abuses of a thing, should be more intent on destroying than correcting. It is this apprehension which, doubtless, causes many men to resist all change: they bear the evil on account of the attendant good; nor will they risk the one to procure the removal of the other. But, if this be policy, it is not wisdom; for he who defends the evil unconsciously endangers the good: and it is not virtue; for he who supports, however unwillingly, the existence of what is vicious, necessarily incurs the same guilt as if he profited by it.†

\* Of this fact abundant evidence may be found in some living divines of the Church of England, who exhibit towards courts a subserviency which is traitorous to religion. See Townsend's "Accusations of History against the Church of Rome," where he censures the church for resisting, *in any sense*, the will of a king.

† We hope the preceding observations will not be misunderstood. Though compelled to censure kings and bishops, we are friends to both as



We have already alluded to the zeal with which St. Anselm encouraged the literature — essentially ecclesiastic — of his age: schools he founded, or endowed, with as much eagerness as his illustrious predecessor; and he never conferred benefices on men who were not as worthy of the choice by their talents as by their virtues. Of the success with which he himself cultivated the learning of the period, his works exhibit sufficient proof. Two thirds of them are comments on various books of scripture; the third volume consists, besides some homilies and epistles, of dissertations on the more recondite doctrines of Christianity, on the peculiar tenets of his church, and some abstruse subjects of scholastic philosophy. Of that philosophy in England he is the father. Thus he enquires — *De Incarnatione Verbi; cur Deus homo; De Veritate; De Libero Arbitrio; De Conceptu Virginali et Peccato Originali; De Processione Spiritus Sancti; De Concordiâ Præscientiæ et Prædestinationis, necnon Gratiæ Dei cum libero Arbitrio*; and other subjects, which now began to be agitated in the continental schools, but which no Saxon ecclesiastic would ever have dreamed of approaching. If we turn to the last of these, the concord of prescience and predestination, we shall perceive that he clearly distinguishes the two. The substance of his reasoning is, that though what God foresees must necessarily happen, the action itself is not necessarily influenced by the foreknowledge. Some future events are bound in the chain of destiny; others, as depending on times and circumstances, are contingent; the former are decreed by infinite power; the latter are foreseen by infinite wisdom. But what has simple foreknowledge in common with necessity? A thing *may* happen, or it may *not* happen; it *must* do one or the other; in either case God must from his in-

*institutions.* That bishops can be as pious as active in every good work as other men, is clear from the example of the protestant prelates of the United States, and of the Roman catholic prelates of Great Britain.

finite perfection foresee it. Necessity, in fact, is an accident, which has nothing whatever to do with simple prescience. Though God foresees that an agent will perform a certain action, he does not impose the necessity of that action. Free-will excludes all necessity; and prescience merely foresees the direction which the free agency will take. If what God foresees *must* happen, there is indeed a necessity; but that necessity is not antecedent, it is subsequent to the action. Thus the sinner will not commit a crime, *because* God has foreseen it; but God has foreseen it, *because* the free agent will commit it. If the prescience of God involved necessity, would God himself be free in what he does every day? Since he must foresee his own work, must he not work by necessity? — But St. Anselm enters more deeply into the subject, and shows that, strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as foreknowledge in the divine mind; that all things, however hidden from us in the distant future, must inevitably be present with God; that as He is circumscribed by no space, so is He bound by no time; that with Him there is no succession of existence or of ideas; that every thing, past, present, or future, as far as regards us creatures of a day, must, with Him, be eternally present. To suppose that in God there could be a succession of ideas; that in the order of his understanding, events followed, dependent on each other like the links of a chain, would be to destroy that infinite wisdom which sees causes and consequences at the same moment: with him all things must be coexistent; nothing can, by possibility, be posterior or anterior. The same reasoning will hold good of his actions no less than of his understanding. With him there can be no succession of actions: what he did yesterday he does to-day and for ever; in fact, with him every thing is one eternal action, without beginning as without end, without causes as without consequences. Motion and action, cause and consequence, beginning and end, are but relative terms, adapted to

our comprehension, but totally inconsistent with the Divine Nature.—Having established the distinction between prescience and necessity; having proved that the former is consistent with our free agency, St. Anselm next enquires, whether the predestination of the elect, as contained in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, contravenes that free agency. He proves, that predestination is, in reality, nothing more than prescience, by which God foresees that some free agents will fulfil, that others will not fulfil, the commands which he has given to man, and to the performance or non-performance of which he has annexed everlasting life and death. The third question, the concord of grace with free will, is no less interesting. The writer proves from Holy Scripture the necessity of grace for every good work, and the simultaneous freedom of the will. He observes the different modes of speaking on this subject in the inspired writings, which sometimes represent grace to be so efficacious, as if it alone were the cause of every good action, to the entire exclusion of free will, while at other times, they ascribe all to free will, as if grace had no operation. He contends that this distinction relates to children and to adults; that in the former, grace alone works to salvation; but that in the latter, free will must co-operate with grace. In one sense, indeed, the adult may be said to owe every thing to grace: as a creature he derives every thing from his Creator, even the power to fulfil that Creator's commands: his faculties are not his own work; but are derived from the favour of God. Without righteousness no man can be saved; whence is this righteousness derived? Not from himself, or he could obtain it by the mere exercise of his will; nor from any other creature; for what *he* has not *another* cannot have; but from the grace of God. But if grace be bestowed, it does not act through necessity, but through the concord of the will. It is the will which receives the grace, and which makes us workers together with God. On this co-operation of

the human and the divine powers, on this union of grace and free will, depends the salvation of man. Hence the propriety of that apostolic command, *Work out your salvation*. This condensed view of St. Anselm's opinions on a subject so abstruse, will convey a fair idea of his general manner. He is always subtle, sometimes mystical and obscure; and his cold abstractions exhibit little of that devotional fire which burns in the works of most other saints. His was the religion of the intellect rather than of the heart, a principle rather than a feeling. Of extensive learning, but still more distinguished for his dialectic powers; comprehensive in his views, yet still more conspicuous for acuteness; clear in his conceptions; connected in his reasonings; we know not any other writer of the eleventh century who will bear comparison with him.\*

The troubled reign of Stephen affords us few materials for a history of the church; but that of Henry II. is prolific enough. At this period, not only did the abuses which we have so amply described subsist, but the hostility between the crown and the church was aggravated by the new disputes between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. In the preceding volume we have alluded to the separation of these courts, which, before the Norman conquest, were one and the same †: but as the subject is important, as a knowledge of it is necessary towards the understanding not only of our own history, but of the history of Europe, we will borrow the words of a writer who has treated it with singular eloquence and erudition.‡

“ 1. From the commencement of Christianity, its professors had been exhorted to withdraw their differences from the cognisance of profane tribunals, and to submit them to the paternal authority of their bishops. § They, by the nature of

Opera S. Anselmi, tom. iii. p. 179, &c. (De Concordia Gratia et Liberi Arbitrii). Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, tom. xxi. p. 282, &c. Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, tom. iii. liv. 3.

† See page 104.

‡ Dr. Lingard.

§ 1 Corinth. vi. 1—6.

their office, were bound to heal the wounds of dissension, and by the sacredness of their character were removed beyond the suspicion of partiality or prejudice. Though an honourable, it was a distracting servitude, from which the more pious would gladly have been relieved; but the advantages of the system recommended it to the approbation of the Christian emperors. Constantine and his successors appointed the bishops the general arbitrators within their respective dioceses; and the officers of justice were compelled to execute their decisions, without either delay or appeal.\* At first, to authorise the interference of the spiritual judge, the previous consent of both the plaintiff and defendant was requisite †; but Theodosius left it to the option of the parties, either of whom was indulged with the liberty of carrying the cause in the first instance into the bishop's court, or even of removing it thither in any stage of the pleadings before the civil magistrates. ‡ Charlemagne inserted this constitution of Theodosius in his code; and ordered it to be invariably observed among all the nations which acknowledged his authority. § If by the imperial law the laity were permitted, by the canon law the clergy were compelled, to accept of the bishop as the judge of civil controversies. || It did not become them to quit the spiritual duties of their profession, and entangle themselves in the intricacies of law proceedings. The principle was fully admitted by the emperor Justinian, who decided that in cases, in which only one of the parties was a clergyman, the cause must be submitted to the decision of the bishop. ¶ This valuable privilege, to which the teachers of the northern nations had been accustomed under their own princes, they naturally established among their converts; and it was soon confirmed to the clergy by the civil power in every Christian country. 3. Constantine had thought that the irregularities of an order of men devoted to the offices of religion, should be veiled from the scrutinising eye of the people. With this view he granted to each bishop, if he were accused of violating the law, the liberty of being tried by his colleagues; and, moreover, invested him with a criminal jurisdiction over his own clergy. \*\* Whether his authority was

\* Eusebius, *Vita Constantina*, iv. 27. Sozomen, *Historia*, i. 9. More arbitri sponte residentis. *Cod. de Epis. Audientia*, leg. 7. *Ibid.* leg. 8.

† *Ibid.* Si qui ex consensu valentur, iii. *Novel.* 12. Sozom. *ibid.*

‡ *Codex Theodos.* Appen. Extravag. 1. De *Epis. Judicio*. Godefroy has proved that this edict should not be attributed to Constantine; but there can be little doubt that it was issued by one of his successors, probably Theodosius, to whom it is ascribed by Charlemagne..

§ *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, vi. 366.

|| *Concilium Carthaginense*, iii. 9.

¶ Justin. *Novel.* lxxix. l. lxxxiii. In *Novel.* cxxiii. 21., he added the liberty of appeal from the bishop's sentence within ten days.

\*\* Niceph. *Hist.* vii. 46. *Conc. Carthag.* iii. 9.

confined to lesser offences, or extended to capital crimes, is a subject of controversy. There are many edicts, which without any limitation reserve the correction of the clergy to the discretion of the bishop \*; but in the novels of Justinian a distinction is drawn between ecclesiastical and civil transgressions. With the former the emperor acknowledges that the civil power has no concern †; the latter are cognisable by the civil judge. Yet, before his sentence can be executed, the convict must be degraded by his ecclesiastical superior; or if the superior refuses, the whole affair must be referred to the consideration of the sovereign. ‡ That this regulation prevailed among the western nations after their separation from the empire, is proved by the canons of several councils §; but the distinction laid down by Justinian was insensibly abolished; and whatever might be the nature of the offence with which a clergyman was charged, he was, in the first instance at least, amenable to none but an ecclesiastical tribunal. || It was thus that on the Continent the spiritual courts were first established, and their authority was afterwards enlarged; but among the Anglo-Saxons the limits of the two judicatures were intermixed and undefined. When the imperial government ceased in other countries, the natives preserved many of its institutions, which the conquerors incorporated with their own laws; but our barbarian ancestors eradicated every prior establishment, and transplanted the manners of the wilds of Germany into the new solitude which they had made. After their conversion, they associated the heads of their clergy with their nobles, and both equally exercised the function of civil magistrates. It is plain that the bishop was the sole judge of the clergy in criminal cases ¶; that he alone decided their differences \*\*, and that to him appertained the cognisance of certain offences against the rights of the church and the sanctions of religion. †† But as it was his duty to sit with the sheriff in the court of the county, his ecclesiastical became blended with his secular jurisdiction; and many causes which in other countries had been reserved to the spiritual judge, were decided in England before a mixed tribunal. This disposition continued in force until the Norman conquest; when, as the reader must have formerly noticed, the two judicatures were completely separated by the

\* Codex Theodos. de Episcop. et Clerica, leg. 41, 42. Codex Justin. de Epis. et Cler. 1.

† Justinian, Novel. lxxxiii. 1. See also Conc. Chalced. iii.; Codex Theod. De Religione, leg. 1.

‡ Justinian, Novel. cxxiii. 21.

§ Synod Parisien, v. can. 4. Synod Matiscon. ii. can. 10.

|| See Capitul. Reg. Francor. i. 38. v. 378. 390. vii. 347. 422. 436.

¶ Leges Saxonicae, 51—111. 115. 129. v. 140. xi. 151.

\*\* Leg. Sax. 83.

†† Leg. Sax. 12. 34. 53. 142.

new sovereign; and in every diocese 'courts Christian,' that is, of the bishop and his archdeacons, were established, after the model, and with the authority of similar courts in all other parts of the Western church.\* The tribunals created by this arrangement were bound, in the terms of the original charter to be guided in their proceedings by the 'episcopal laws,' — a system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, composed of the canons of councils, the decrees of popes, and the maxims of the more ancient fathers. This, like all other codes of law, had, in the course of centuries, received numerous additions. New cases perpetually occurred; new decisions were given; and new compilations were made and published. The two which at the time of the Conquest prevailed in the spiritual courts of France, and which were sanctioned by the charter of William in England, were the collection under the name of Isidore, and that of Burchard bishop of Worms.† About the end of the century appeared a new code from the pen of Ivo, bishop of Chartres, whose acquaintance with the civil law of Rome

\* *Leg. Sax.* 192. There can be no doubt that the existence of these courts was confined, as often as our kings confined in general terms the liberties of the clergy. Blackstone, misled by an ambiguous passage in an old collection of laws, supposes that Henry I. abolished "the courts christian," (comment. iii. 5.) but the same collection frequently mentions them as in existence, and says expressly, in the words of St. Ambrose, *Sanctum est in causis fidei vel ecclesiastici alicujus ordinis cum judicare debere, qui nec munere impar sit, nec jure dissimilis.* *Leg. Sax.* 237.

† It is evident from the Anglo-Saxon councils that that they followed a collection of canons, which was termed *Codex canonum vetus ecclesie Romanae*. I suspect it was that of Martin bishop of Braga, sent by pope Adrian to Charlemagne; as at the same time the legates of that pontiff came to England, and held two councils for the reformation of ecclesiastical discipline. In the beginning of the ninth century, Riculf, bishop of Mentz, brought into Gaul a new compilation by a writer who called himself Isidore (*Hinemari Optus*. xxiv.), but this compilation contained decrees which had been hitherto unknown. Former collections began with the decisions of Siricius: Isidore added many said to have been given by his predecessors. It is now acknowledged that they are forgeries; and from their tendency, they seem to have been framed for the particular purpose of withdrawing prelates accused of crimes from the immediate jurisdiction of the archbishop and the provincial synod, and placing them in the first instance under the protection of the pontiff. In an age unacquainted with the art of criticism, no one doubted the authenticity of these spurious decrees: the enemies of the innovation only contended that, whatever might have been decided by the first pontiffs, the contrary had afterwards been established by their successors (*Frodoard*, iii. 22.). But the interests of the bishops coincided in this case with that of the pontiffs; by their united influence, the opposition of the metropolitans was borne down; and the decrees in the compilation of Isidore were admitted as laws of the church. About 1010, Burchard made a new collection, into which they were also introduced. Whether they had been followed in England, we have not the means to ascertain; but in France their authority was no longer doubted; and by the *Leges Episcopales*, the Norman bishops would certainly understand the laws contained in the two compilations of Isidore and Burchard. I have added this note, because some writers seem to suppose that it was not till after the decretum of Gratian that the false decretals were admitted in this kingdom.

enabled him to give to his work a superiority over the compilations of his predecessors. Yet the knowledge of Ivo must have been confined to the Theodosian code, the Institutes, and mutilated extracts from the Pandects of Justinian. But when Amalfi was taken by the Pisans in 1137, an entire copy of the last work was discovered; and its publication immediately attracted, and almost monopolised, the attention of the learned.\* Among the students and admirers of the Pandects was Gratian, a monk of Bologna, who conceived the idea of compiling a digest of the canon law on the model of that favourite work; and soon afterwards, having incorporated with his own labours the collections of the former writers, he gave his 'Decretum' to the public in 1151. From that moment the two codes, the civil and canon laws, were deemed the principal repositories of legal knowledge; and the study of each was supposed necessary to throw light on the other. Roger the bachelor, a monk of Bec, had already read lectures on the sister sciences in England; but he was advanced to the government of his abbey †, and the English scholars, immediately after the publication of the Decretum, crowded to the more renowned professors in the city of Bologna. After their return they practised in the episcopal courts; their respective merits were easily appreciated; and the proficiency of the more eminent was rewarded with an ample harvest of wealth and preferment. This circumstance gave to the spiritual a marked superiority over the secular courts. The proceedings in the former were guided by fixed and invariable principles, the result of the wisdom of ages; the latter were compelled to follow a system of jurisprudence confused and uncertain, partly of Anglo-Saxon, partly of Norman origin, and depending on precedents, of which some were furnished by memory, others had been transmitted by tradition. The clerical judges were men of talent and education: men preferred the uniformity and equity of their decisions, to the caprice and violence which seemed to sway the royal and baronial justiciaries; and by degrees every cause, which legal ingenuity could connect with the provisions of the canons, whether it regarded tithes, or advowsons, or public scandal, or marriage, or testaments, or perjury, or breach of contract, was drawn before the ecclesiastical tribunals. A spirit of rivalry rose between the two judicatures, which quickly ripened into open hostility. On the one side were ranged the bishops and chief dignitaries of the church; on the other the

\* See Vol. I. p. 243. of this compendium.

† Chronicon Norman. 783. Gervase, 1665 (Twysden). He was made abbot in 1149. From John of Salisbury, we learn that Stephen prohibited the lectures of Roger.



king and the barons ; both equally interested in the quarrel, because both were accustomed to receive the principal share of the fines, fees, and forfeitures in their respective courts. Archbishop Theobald had seen the approach, and trembled for the issue of the contest ; and from his death-bed he wrote to Henry, recommending to his protection the liberties of the church, and putting him on his guard against the machinations of his enemies." \*

- 1162 Every reader in these days must agree that these liberties were inconsistent with the well-being of the community. The clergy were no doubt better qualified as to knowledge, and more disposed to equity, than the baronial judges ; and, as we have before observed †, their expulsion from the judicial courts by the Conqueror was not agreeable to the people. But the discharge of functions so dissimilar to their proper duties, could not fail to distract their minds from the concerns of religion ; nor to generate a worldly spirit, injurious to their holy vocation. Besides, when the Roman see began to promulgate claims which directly tended to the establishment of an universal theocratic power, which would have reduced all the nations of the earth to a slavish dependence on the pope, it was high time to check the presumption. But for the vigorous opposition of the Christian princes of Europe, there would infallibly have been established a spiritual despotism intolerable as that of the grand Lama. Under the Saxon rule, when the popes were too distant and too feeble to influence the civil government, when the royal thanes and sheriffs were sunk in brutish ignorance, not only was there no harm, there was positive and great good, in the association of so intelligent a dignitary as the bishop in the judicial office. Such a system, however, could not well be permitted after the eleventh century, when the subjection of kings and nations to the chair of St. Peter was so openly proclaimed. Wisely, therefore, did the Conqueror confine

\* Lingard's History of England, vol. ii. p. 54, &c.

† See Vol. III. p. 104. of this compendium.

the jurisdiction of the spiritual courts to the offences of ecclesiastics alone. But even this limitation was found by experience to be insufficient. By the canons, no ecclesiastical judge could pass sentence of death; the heaviest punishments he could inflict were flagellation and imprisonment; and even these were less frequent than fines and suspension. Now it is manifest, that where the crime was heinous, such punishment was a mockery of justice: it was worse; for it inspired a confidence little short of impunity, and was a direct incentive to crime. The evil was greatly enhanced by the fact, that many could claim the clerical privileges who were not clergymen; for whoever had received the tonsure, whether he afterwards embraced holy orders or not, was entitled to them. Hence, there were many who had no cure, who belonged to no monastery, who led a vagabond life, just as their disposition impelled them, who owned no obedience to the secular tribunals, who were ever ready for crime; and, when detected, were no less ready to invoke the privileges of their order. If, as we are informed, during the first ten years of Henry's reign, no less than one hundred homicides had been perpetrated by members of the clerical order, well might that monarch resolve that such a state of things should not continue. He knew that the feeling of the nation was with him; and he expected much from the co-operation of his friend and chancellor Thomas à Becket, on whom he had just conferred the archbishopric of Canterbury.\*

The life of this celebrated prelate has been so often and <sup>1117</sup> so amply detailed, that we should be inexcusable for dwelling on it so largely as we intend, but for two reasons. <sup>to</sup> <sup>1162.</sup> It is more closely connected with the church of

\* Radulfus de Diceto, *Imagines Historiarum*, p. 520, &c. Brompton, *Chronicon*, passim. Gervase, *Chronica*, p. 1382., necnon *Acta Pontificum Cantuariensium*, p. 1668. Robertus de Monte, *Chronica* (sub annis). Wilkins, *Concilia*, tom. i. p. 428, &c. (in *Synodo Cicestrensi*). Lingard, *History of England*, ii. 60. If the reader wish to see this subject beautifully confused, let him look into Townsend's "Accusations of History against the Church of Rome," Letters 7 & 8.

England, than that of any other man; and we know not that it has hitherto been fairly represented by any writer, Roman catholic or protestant. As we are perfectly free from the bias which has evidently swayed both, we approach the subject with the same honesty of purpose, and the same fearless resolution of speaking the truth, as, we hope, have hitherto guided us. — He was born in London in the year 1117. His father, Gilbert, was a merchant of that city: his mother, if any faith be due to the relations of Brompton and other authorities, was the daughter of a Syrian emir, who followed Gilbert to London, was converted, and married to the object of her affections. Educated successively under the canons of Merton at Oxford and at Paris, he next attended the lectures on canon law by the famous Gratian at Bologna, while he learned the civil law from another professor in that renowned university. The latter appears to have been his favourite pursuit, — doubtless, because it offered the most alluring prospect to his ambition. He was fortunate in having for his patron Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, at whose instigation he had studied the law; yet the rapidity of his promotion, immediately after his return, must surprise us. Successively presented with preferment in the cathedrals of Lincoln and St. Paul's, with the provostship of Beverley, and with the archdeaconry of Canterbury, he soon received from Henry the office of chancellor. He had been the friend, the confidential adviser of the archbishop: he was now to possess an equal influence over the mind of the king. It seemed, indeed, as if no post or emoluments were sufficient for him. With the government of the realm as chancellor, he held the preceptorship of prince Henry, eldest son of the monarch; the wardenship of the tower of London, the castle of Berkhamstead, and the honour of Eye, with three hundred and forty knights' fees. His revenues must have been immense, to support so vast and so magnificent an establishment as his household now displayed. Thousands of knights are said

to have been his vassals : thousands certainly frequented his table, which was open to all who had business at court ; never did he sit down to it unaccompanied by men of higher rank than these, — by many barons and earls. The gold and silver of his palace was immense ; the very bit of his horse's bridle is said to have been a treasure. Notwithstanding the multitude who ate at his table, the entertainment consisted of the most costly viands and of the choicest wines. The presents, too, which he daily made, — horses, birds, garments, plate, and money, — prove his inexhaustible resources. All this splendid show, this boundless hospitality, was intended to win the popular favour, of which he is said by one of his biographers to have been immeasurably fond. In fact, his fame soon spread throughout Christian Europe ; the sons of foreign nobles were sent to serve in his household, to be instructed in all the accomplishments of the age, and ultimately to win the honour of knight-hood. His style of living was not more splendid than his familiarity with the king was unbounded. Henry indeed lived with him as one brother with another, and apparently with more than a brother's affection ; the monarch, in fact, appears to have been gratified by the princely state of his minister. The surprise of the French is described as excessive when Becket proceeded to Paris, to negotiate a marriage between prince Henry and a daughter of their king. He was accompanied by 200 knights of his household, besides many barons and nobles, and a whole army of domestics, who were well armed and magnificently attired : the chancellor himself had four and twenty changes of apparel. His train of waggons and sumpter-horses was endless ; and, to pursue at leisure his favourite diversion of hunting and hawking, he had abundance of dogs and birds, with the necessary domestics. When he entered a town, he carefully exhibited his pomp. The procession was headed by 250 boys, singing English ballads ; next advanced his hounds, with their keepers ; then his waggons, carrying his wines, viands, wardrobe, kitchen

utensils, chapel books, &c. ; next his sumpter-horses, with their grooms ; then the squires of the knights, carrying the shields, and leading the steeds of their masters ; next, other armour-bearers and pages ; next, the falconers and their birds ; then cup-bearers and other gentlemen of the household ; behind them, the knights and clergy, riding two and two in solemn state ; and lastly, the great chancellor himself, with his familiar friends. Well might the people exclaim, What a wonderful personage must king Henry be, when his chancellor can thus travel ! At Paris, his magnificence was much superior to this : and, in a Norman expedition, in which he accompanied his royal master, we read that he had 700 knights of his own household, besides 1200 stipendiary knights and 4000 cavalry. In this foreign display there was doubtless policy ; nor should we be much disposed to condemn the chancellor's hospitality at home, were he merely a layman. But in this ostentatious pomp, we look in vain for the humble, retiring, unobtrusive virtues which ought, on all occasions, to adorn the clerical character. At this period, Becket was evidently a man little fitted to increase the popular reverence for religion. He partook of the follies, even of the lighter vices of the world, without scruple ; and we have reason to suspect that he was a tool equally convenient and ready whenever his services were required by a master not over scrupulous in the choice of means. But whatever might be his vanity, his administration was certainly able, and beneficial to the country. He restored domestic tranquillity, which, through a lax and vicious administration of the laws, had long been disturbed with impunity ; he rendered the judges more vigilant, as well as more circumspect ; he raised the standard of qualification for the judicial office ; he encouraged the commerce of the kingdom, and caused it to be respected abroad. But he was soon to enter on a sphere for which his previous life and habits little qualified him. In 1161, archbishop Theobald died, and Becket was at once desig-

nated by the public voice as the man who must inevitably succeed. The anticipation was verified. After a vacancy of about thirteen months — for Henry was in no more haste than his predecessors<sup>o</sup> to provide rich sees with bishops\* — the archdeacon was told to prepare for the dignity. The king felt assured that the archbishop would be as pliant as the chancellor; that he should have a powerful coadjutor in the reformation which he had resolved to effect in the ecclesiastical judicature of the nation. The intelligence was not agreeable to the electors, the clergy, and monks of Canterbury; who, though they were compelled to obey the royal mandate, declared that no scandal could be greater than the appointment of a soldier, a courtier, a hunter, to the primacy of the English church. The bishop of Hereford, a man of rigid morals and of great canonical learning, jeeringly observed, that now, indeed, a miracle had been performed, — a soldier transferred into a priest, a layman into an archbishop. At the time of his presentation, Becket was only in deacon's orders; he had to be ordained priest, and to be consecrated bishop, before he could enter on his high functions.—In what manner did Becket himself receive the intimation of his appointment? He had evidently expected it; he could be no stranger to the king's intention during the vacancy: but, contrary to the opinion of most modern writers, we have serious doubts whether that intimation was agreeable to him. When it was first made, he looked on his splendid garments, and ironically observed to the king, that he certainly had much the appearance of an archbishop; he added, *with a smile*, that if he accepted the dignity, he must either lose the king's favour, or sacrifice to it the service of God. The *smile* might probably make in Henry's mind an impression, that the chancellor would not make so rigid a primate as his words implied;

\* Mr. Turner, in his usual spirit, represents the thirteen months' vacancy as *following*, instead of *preceeding*, the intimation that Becket was to be archbishop.

but we have no reason to infer that such an effect was designed. If, in reality, he were unbecomingly swayed by that ambition, that love of power, which is now ascribed to him, why should he seek the primacy? why not remain as he was, the virtual ruler of state and church, instead of assuming a dignity which might circumscribe his worldly pomp and influence? At the very moment he accepted it, he had manifestly resolved to resign his situation at court,—all that to a man truly ambitious would have possessed any value,—for one of his first acts was to return the seals to the king, with an intimation that he was hardly equal to the duties of one office, much less of two. This fact, we think, is decisive. Had Becket wished for power, he would certainly have retained the office of chancellor; had he been “crafty” and “hypocritical,” he would not have sacrificed his worldly interest—the favour of his sovereign—the government of a great kingdom—unbounded wealth—and for what? Where is the equivalent he gained by such a sacrifice? Surely not the approbation of an old man at Rome, too distant and too feeble to benefit him; nor the popular applause, which he could have commanded much more easily by retaining his secular post. The only course which lay open to a man truly ambitious, and not over-scrupulous as to the means of gratifying the passion,—the only one which he would or could have taken,—was to centre in his own person the dignities of chancellor and archbishop, and to flatter the king. Those dignities were so far from being considered incompatible with each other, that they were often held by men of deserved reputation; in fact, during several reigns, the chancellor in England had always been a prelate; and at that very moment the office was held, in Germany, by the archbishop of Mentz; in France, by an abbot; in the kingdoms of Spain, by ecclesiastics.—So far we have had little reason to praise Thomas à Becket; we have, on the contrary, represented his conduct as discreditable to himself and disgraceful to the church;

but, in the present instance, no conceivable motive can be ascribed to his conduct other than that which all his contemporaries mention in his honour,—*i. e.* a sincere desire to discharge his archiepiscopal functions in a proper manner.\*

The remarkable change now effected in the conduct <sup>1162,</sup> of the archbishop occasioned much surprise. He sud- <sup>1163.</sup> denly renounced not merely the splendours but the necessaries of life; and planned a course of penance that might rival the most ascetic saints of the church. He wore sackcloth next to his skin; his food was of the coarsest description; his drink was water made bitter with herbs; to his bare back he frequently applied the discipline; on his knees he daily washed the feet of thirteen beggars, and gave to each four pieces of silver; and in all his actions he showed as if he never took pleasure in any thing but the duties of his new station. His train of knights and nobles was exchanged for the company of a few pious ecclesiastics. Occupied in acts of mercy—in visiting the sick, the poor, the public hospitals; in relieving distress; in consoling the unfortunate; in admonishing the vicious; or in the interminable duties of the altar, or in private prayer and meditation, no greater phenomenon could be exhibited than this new Becket. Was this conversion sincere? or was it assumed to attain some selfish end? Few modern writers have hesitated to adopt the hypothesis less favourable to human nature; but common sense, to say nothing of justice, requires that where certain motives are ascribed to a man with a view to a certain end; those motives and this end should harmonise with

\* *Quadriologus*, lib. i. cap. 1—8. (so called because drawn up from four contemporary biographers). *Stephanides, Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 11—25. *Edwardus, Vita ejusdem*, p. 355, &c. (apud *Surium, de Probatis Vitis Sanctorum, die Decemb. xxix.*). *Brompton, Chronicon*, p. 1052—1058. (apud *Twysden Decem Scriptores, tom. i.*). *Radulfus de Diceto, Imagines Historiarum*, p. 532. (in eodem tomo). *Gervase, Chronica*, p. 1376, &c. (in eodem tomo), *nonon Actus Pontificum Cantuariensium*, p. 168. (in eodem). *Chronicon Normannicum*, probably *Robertus de Monte*, (apud *Duchesne, Rerum Normannicarum Scriptores*, p. 994.)



each other. What end could that be which the archbishop proposed to himself in these austere observances? Power? — He had voluntarily abandoned it. Wealth? — That too he had abandoned. Popularity? — He had it before; he might have had a greater portion of it had he retained his former honours and riches: for however the religious man may be respected by a few, the generous and the liberal one only will be much lauded in this world. All these, with the favour of a great prince, he had sacrificed: he had voluntarily forsaken a sphere in which he had directed the affairs of an empire, for retirement in a cloister; he had descended to the level of other bishops — to pass his days, for any thing he could know, in comparative obscurity. If this were ambition, it certainly chose a most extraordinary way of manifesting itself — one that must set all calculation at defiance. But, observes another, evidently struck with the absurdity of the implied charge, admitting that he renounced every thing which in this world men most esteem, was he not an aspirant for canonisation? We know not what degree of gravity could attend such a question. Would any man, for a mere posthumous fame, which he could not possibly enjoy, renounce the substantial, envied advantages of the present hour? And could he be *sure* of attaining his object? This hypothesis is more absurd than the other. There is certainly enough of knavery and of hypocrisy in this world; but wherever either exists, one may at least expect it to be consistent with itself. Neither the knave nor the hypocrite can boast of much wisdom; but to both some cunning is necessary. What, however, are we to infer in cases where, according to our usual calculations, not only not the slightest appearance of cunning, or even of common sense, but the grossest stupidity, is manifested? Assuredly, in the solution of such a problem, we must either ascribe the actions of the man to downright folly, or we must give him credit for being influenced by other motives. There

is no escaping this dilemma. Now, Thomas à Becket was no fool — a tyro in logic may complete the syllogism. That the archbishop, in his sudden change, was actuated by conscience, will be affirmed by every unbiassed mind throughout the world. Whether his motives were wise ones, is a very different question. We have little respect for the ascetic habits which he now assumed; we must rather pity than admire the piety which could thus renounce the few enjoyments that God himself has vouchsafed to man; we must deplore the narrow views thus taken of the benign religion, which makes the enjoyment of moderate pleasure a positive duty: which commands us to receive and to use, with humble gratitude, what Infinite Goodness wills us to receive. But the religion of Becket was that of his day: nor is he to be blamed for observing the path which his own notions of duty, however erroneous, sanctified in his eyes.\*

This change in the conduct of the archbishop was 1133. displeasing to the king, who began to fear that he should find a less pliant instrument than he had expected. His affection for his former favourite perceptibly cooled: a circumstance soon understood by the courtiers, who characteristically endeavoured to fan the rising flame. Their labours were successful; for the king was by nature suspicious as well as vindictive: he knew the talents, he dreaded the influence of the primate. For his and their hostility towards the churchmen, other reasons may be given. Unmindful of the powerful names which were implicated, he instituted proceedings for the recovery of all such lands as had been usurped and were obstinately detained from the church,—lands which he justly considered as the patrimony, not only of his order, but of the poor. From the king he demanded, among other things, the castle and town of Rochester; from the

\* The same authorities.

Earl of Clare the castle of Tunbridge ; and from other nobles possessions no less important. Some of them had been recently usurped ; others had remained for some time in the grasp of power ; nor had all the efforts of Anselm been able to wrest them from it.\* That these demands should spread alarm and indignation amongst all who benefited by the plunder, was inevitable. Henry was in a rage ; especially when the primate excommunicated a lord who refused to receive a clergyman presented by himself. Like Rufus, he insisted that no one who held of the crown should be excommunicated without his consent ; a pretension which, had it been recognised, would effectually have screened the king's ministers and the whole body of the great nobility from all responsibility ; which would have laid the church at their feet, and destroyed not only all dread of censure, but all fear of punishment. Whatever may be the opinion of most modern historians, we do not think that the church is much benefited by its slavish dependence on the crown,—a dependence which, we hope, is, in this country at least, about to be abolished for ever. It was the constant policy of the Norman, as it has been of the Hanoverian kings, to make the ecclesiastical dignities a source of corrupt patronage ; to confer them on none but the obsequious ministers of their will ; to destroy every feeling of independence in the clerical body ; to reward the smooth-tongued flatterer ; and to exile both learning and principle into the poorest and most remote rural districts. In any attempt, therefore, to limit the monstrous usurpation of the crown, — we say this at the risk of displeasing both kings and ministers of kings ; both courtly bishops, and all who hope to become such, — Becket has our applause. In the same spirit, too, we may express our regret that Lanfrancs and

\* Following the most prejudiced modern guides, Mr. Turner (*Hist. Eng.* i. 239.) represents these claims as unjust. But when we turn to Townsend (*Accusations of History*, letter 8.), we find the prejudices of Mr. Turner, without his knowledge.

Beckets are no longer to be found on the right reverend bench. But Becket resisted, not only where he had justice on his side, but where it had deserted him for that of the king. In this case, our sympathy must be with the monarch, even though we may condemn his violence, and suspect his motives. In the time of Theobald, Philip de Broc, a canon of Bedford, had committed fornication and murder; yet had he only been sentenced by the ecclesiastical court to make pecuniary compensation to the relations of the deceased. It even appeared that the odious culprit had been restored to his functions;—to its revenues, the only thing which he valued, he certainly had. In the open court at Dunstable, the royal justiciary, alluding to the criminal indulgence of the ecclesiastical courts, called Philip a murderer. Philip retorted in a tone of insult. The justiciary, offended at the contempt shown to his authority, naturally complained to the king; and the king, feeling himself insulted in the person of his representative, insisted that the man should not only be indicted in the bishop's court for this new offence, but that the former punishment should be reconsidered, with a view to its aggravation. He was accordingly tried, sentenced to be whipped, to be deprived of his benefice, and to be banished during two years.\* The punishment would, doubtless, have been still more severe, had not the culprit been tried and punished before. But Henry was dissatisfied: he wished the delinquent to be degraded, and delivered over to the secular arm; but he was opposed by Becket. In a council at Westminster he renewed the subject, and demanded that, in all future cases of delinquency, the culprit should be thus treated. He said truly, that clerical criminals ought to be punished more severely than others; and

\* The severity of the punishment has not been sufficiently noticed by historians: — "Prebendæ suæ mulctatus-est beneficio, pulsus-est à regno per biennium." — *Diceto*, 537. These words imply something more than that he was suspended during two years.

he bitterly complained, that in rendering all crimes redeemable by pecuniary mulcts, they raised more money in the kingdom than he did. The bishops objected, that such a concession would destroy their privileges ; that it was manifestly unjust, since the same individual would be twice tried and twice punished for the same offence. They forgot, however, that the punishment of their courts did not deserve the name ; that it created an odious distinction between lay and ecclesiastical criminals. Neither justice nor patriotism had so much influence over them as the preservation of their monstrous immunities. The conduct of Becket on this occasion does him little honour. No doubt he believed that the defence of these immunities was expected from him by the church ; but surely he must have known that what the monarch demanded was in the strictest sense equitable, and necessary to the weal of the community. Henry was provoked, as he well might be, at the opposition he encountered. He shifted his ground ; and asked, with some policy, whether the bishops would observe the ancient customs of the realm. " Saving our order," was the reply. This clause, " saving our order," involved the retention of all the obnoxious privileges of that order. In a rage, which we very willingly forgive, the king observing that the bishops were in a league against him to defeat the administration of justice, abruptly left the hall. The next morning Becket was deprived of the manor of Rye and the castle of Berkhamstead, which he had been allowed to retain,—a punishment not undeserved. The other bishops, too, began to tremble at the royal anger : some said that the points in dispute had better be conceded at once ; others, among whom was the archbishop of York, that they might yield for the present, and resume the contest at a more favourable time. Their fears, or their corruption—for some of them appear to have been soon gained by the crown—would, perhaps, have had little effect on the archbishop, had he not been artfully

assured by the pope's almoner, who had also been gained, that he would most consult the interests of the church by a compliance ; that he was enjoined by their spiritual sovereign to conciliate the royal mind ; that the immunities of the church were in no danger ; that Henry, whose pride was involved, would be content with the honour of a nominal victory. Persuaded, but not convinced, the primate repaired to the king, and reluctantly promised to omit the obnoxious clause. That the royal purpose, however, was more serious than the almoner or the bishops had represented, was evident when Henry summoned a great council to meet at Clarendon, to receive the formal renunciation of the church. But, when required to promise the observance of the customs, Becket, with an inconsistency which must be severely censured, repeated his refusal. Henry was not a man to be thus defied : he threatened the primate with exile, even with death ; and there can be little doubt that, in the violence of a temper which never spared mortal man, the threat was fully intended to be executed. A neighbouring door was suddenly thrown open, and a body of knights were perceived, armed, with their garments tucked up, and ready for some tragical deed. Probably the vengeance would not have been confined to Becket ; other bishops had reason to tremble for their safety. On their knees they besought him to have pity on himself and on them ; two earls distinctly informed him that their orders were to proceed to extremities, and besought him, with equal earnestness, to avert, by an instant consent, a fate which must cover all present with calamity and disgrace : two knight-templars, bathed in tears, and prostrated at his feet, joined the bishops and the earls, beseeching him to have pity on others if he had none on himself. Moved for them, not for himself, Becket again promised to observe " the customs." The other prelates followed his example. To prevent all future misunderstanding, " the customs," which had

hitherto been very indefinite, we might say unknown, were committed to writing, and produced the following day. They consist of sixteen articles, and are known in history as the Constitutions of Clarendon. By one, the custody of every vacant archbishopric, bishopric, abbey, and priory of royal foundation, and the revenues during the vacancy, were confirmed to the crown. Henry's own conduct shows the tenacity with which he adhered to this profitable abuse. From the records of the exchequer we learn that in his sixteenth year he was enjoying the revenues of one archbishopric, five bishoprics, and three abbeys; that in his nineteenth, the number of vacant sees, archiepiscopal and episcopal, was the same, while that of the abbeys had doubled; that in his twenty-first — so well had he learned his interest — he kept vacant one archbishopric, six bishoprics, and seven abbeys. Had he been allowed to proceed without interruption, every dignity in the English church would eventually have been in his hands; nor would he have filled one of them without a full equivalent from the prelate he might condescend to nominate. Is it necessary to call that article monstrous which sanctioned such an abuse? In this country the usurpation had been advanced by William Rufus; but in Germany it had subsisted for some time. How it can be called an *ancient* custom, is difficult to conceive; besides, it had been renounced by Henry, by Stephen, by the reigning monarch himself; and its recognition was incompatible with the interests of religion. — Another of the constitutions, — that new dignitaries should be elected in consequence of the king's writ, with his assent, with the advice of whatever persons he chose to assemble for the occasion; and, to crown all, in his own chapel — we should reprobate as equally fatal to religion. Kings have seldom the sagacity to discover, or the honesty to reward, merit, whether in church or lay dignitaries.\*

\* We should say the same of any other *government*, whether aristocratical or democratical. Kings are no worse than other men.

By another, no tenant in capite of the crown could be excommunicated, or his lands placed under an interdict, without application to the king, or the royal justiciary. One reason for this constitution is sufficiently obvious: as an excommunicated vassal was cut off from all intercourse with others, the king must, of necessity, lose his services for that period. But there was another and more political reason: the dread of such a sentence often restrained men, who were sufficiently inclined to execute the most violent mandates of the king; remove the dread, and there would cease to be a barrier between every species of injustice and the royal will. By one article, no dignified ecclesiastic was to go beyond sea without the king's permission,—evidently to prevent all complaints from reaching the papal ear. By another, appeals in ecclesiastical cases were to be progressively carried from the archdeacon to the archbishop; and finally terminated by the royal precept in the court of the latter. This was manifestly aiming a blow at all appeals to the court of Rome, and was at the same time establishing the virtual supremacy of the king over the English church.—By every unbiassed reader the preceding articles will be acknowledged to have been pernicious, inasmuch as they were subversive of religion. But the Constitutions of Clarendon contain as much good as evil. The articles which subjected the clergy, in general cases, to the secular courts, were wise, patriotic, and indispensable to the well-being of the community. Where one of the litigating parties was an ecclesiastic, the suit was always to be prosecuted in the royal courts. In all cases clerical delinquents were to be first cited before the king's justiciary, who was to determine, from the nature of the case, whether it was to be tried there, or to be referred to the ecclesiastical court. Even where the offence clearly lay within the spiritual jurisdiction, a royal functionary was to be present to see that if the delinquent pleaded guilty, or were convicted, the church should no longer protect him; that he should



be delivered over to the secular tribunals. Equally salutary were some other articles concerning presentations, disputes about tenements and fiefs, and the subjecting of laymen for offences purely spiritual to the bishop's court: they were carefully framed so as to circumscribe the mischievous powers of the rival jurisdictions. Such, in substance, were these celebrated Constitutions, which we have blamed or praised solely in reference to their tendency. On the whole, it would be difficult to say whether they contained more good or evil. Most of them have long been incorporated into the civil jurisprudence, not of England only, but of every Roman Catholic country in Europe. Of those, however, which are really obnoxious, we do not think better on this account. In all countries governments will be rapacious and corrupt; in all they will readily sacrifice integrity to interest; utility to favouritism.\*

1165. No sooner did the archbishop perceive the nature of these conditions than he was justly staggered at their magnitude. No situation could be less en-iable than his. Could he comply without betraying the church and religion itself? The other bishops placed their seals to the document; but he refused. He had promised, he said, to observe "the customs," and he would do no more. On this trying occasion he has been blamed for duplicity, but with little justice. Alarm for the lives of his fellow bishops made him reluctantly sanction what he openly disapproved. He is, however, censurable enough: it was his duty at once, and finally, to declare his hostility to the more obnoxious Constitutions. If he had promised to observe "the customs," he had evidently no anticipation of some articles which were

\* Stephanides, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 24—55. Edwardus, *Vita ejusdem*, p. 556. (apud Surium, *de Probatis Sanctorum Vitæ*, die Decemb. xxix.). Diceto, *Imagines Historiarum*, p. 537. Bromton, *Chronicon*, p. 1059. Gervase, *Chronica*, p. 1306. necnon *Actus Pontificum Cantuariensium*, p. 1670. (omnes apud Twysden, *Decem Scriptores*. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, necnon Alfordus, *Annales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, A. D. 1163, 1164. Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonice*, p. 321—324. The Constitutions of Clarendon are in Gervase and Wilkins; the latter has two copies, substantially the same, but differing in phraseology.

afterwards produced ; he might, therefore, have easily discovered a new ground of opposition. Subsequently, he proved that he could, as far as regarded himself, despise consequences ; why did he not despise them now ? His conduct was more than rash : it was unwise. He should have distinguished the salutary from the pernicious articles ; and declared his adhesion to them. Though that adhesion would not, probably, have been accepted — for the king was evidently resolved to enforce the observance of all ; — yet, by the offer, he would have stood better justified both with his own times and with posterity. On the whole, however, he is as much deserving of pity as of blame. His reluctant consent to “ the customs ” had not acquired the favour, his subsequent conduct provoked the wrath, of the king. Scarcely had he left the presence, than the reproaches of some ecclesiastics, and still more, those of his own heart, threw him into a state of agony. He interdicted himself from the service of the altar, and wrote to pope Alexander for a release from the oath which he had taken to observe the customs. By that pontiff, who minutely distinguishes between crimes which are the effect of the spontaneous will, of ignorance, of necessity, and who placed his conduct at Clarendon in the last case, he was accordingly absolved, and commanded to resume the service of the altar. The Constitutions themselves were severely condemned, and were annulled by the pope. Becket wished, however, to mollify the king, and to make some equitable compromise with him ; probably, had the more obnoxious conditions been withdrawn, he would have readily subscribed to the rest. From this moment the sympathy of every reader must be with him. In the spirit of concord he went to Woodstock, where the monarch then was ; yet he was unable to obtain an interview. It was evident that his ruin was resolved. In his sudden alarm he sought to escape into France ; but the mariners, knowing Henry’s vindictive temper, dared not take him. To crush him, a parliament was convoked at North-

ampton, and he was summoned to appear before it. In the hope of making his peace, he obeyed the citation. The first day Henry was inaccessible; the second, the archbishop waited in the royal apartments until the monarch's appearance; but though he advanced with a submissive and reverential air to give or to receive the kiss of peace — the invariable form of salutation — he was repulsed, and was thereby made still more sensible of his danger. Never were charges more frivolous or more vexatious brought against any individual than those by which Becket was now assailed. By some modern writers Henry is blamed for not arraigning the prelate for disregarding the Constitutions of Clarendon. It should, however, be remembered that they had been condemned by the pope, and that Becket, in virtue of his canonical obedience, was compelled to disregard them: the assumption of such a ground would have been a positive renunciation of the papal jurisdiction; a virtual separation of the English church from the communion of Rome. For the gratification of the royal revenge no way remained open except that offered by the feudal jurisdiction of the crown, — a way, however, broad enough to admit any charge. The first accusation was, that he had refused justice to a complainant. The defence was unanswerable, — that the complainant in question had sworn to the case, not on the gospels, but on a book of songs. But Henry was not to be baffled; it was discovered, that when summoned to show in the royal court why he had refused justice to this suitor, he had not obeyed the citation. In vain did the prelate allege that he had sent four knights to answer for him, and to explain the nullity of the juror's oath: his neglecting to appear was defined to be high treason; and by the obsequious court his goods and chattels were declared forfeited to the king! This was not the worst. In all such cases, custom had substituted a fine in lieu of the penalty; that commutation varied in different places, — in Kent it was 40*s.* only;

in London it was 100*s.*; but none of them suited the disposition of the lawless king, who caused the fine to be fixed at 500*l.*! Let us remember that this sum is equivalent to 6000*l.* according to the present value of money; that the legal penalty would have been 40*s.* only; and above all, that no penalty whatever was incurred, since the charge itself was utterly unfounded. The archbishop gave security for the 500*l.*—The second demand was for 300*l.*, which he had received while warden of Eye and Berkhamstead. The reply was equally convincing, — that more than 300*l.* had been expended in their repairs; but he added, he would pay it, for mere money should be no ground of quarrel between him and his sovereign. The nobleness, and at the same time the conciliatory tone of the observation, were lost on the tyrant, who proceeded to make a third demand of 500*l.*, which he asserted had been lent to Becket under the walls of Toulouse. The archbishop contended — no doubt truly — that the money was a gift; but his word could not prevail against the monarch's, and for this sum also the base court compelled him to give security. It might be supposed that royal injustice would now be satisfied; but there was another demand which was made, in the resolution irrecoverably to ruin him. He was required to account for all the monies he had received from the vacant ecclesiastical dignities during his chancellorship, and a balance was struck against him of no less a sum than 44,000 marks! The archbishop stood aghast. The money he had no doubt expended in the king's service; but the plea would have availed him as little as the preceding ones. He had another and unanswerable one, — that before his consecration he had never been questioned for such a pretended balance; that on the contrary, when so consecrated, both prince Henry and the royal justiciary had, at the king's own command, discharged him from all secular demands, and that, so absolved, the church had received him. Monstrous as

was the claim, and little as he was bound to answer it, he offered a large sum by way of composition, but it was contemptuously refused. Nor did he find much support in his brother bishops: all but two had been corrupted by the crown; all but two advised him to resign, — the evident tendency of the tyrant's measures. The names of these two prelates, so honourably distinguished from their base associates, ought to be mentioned. The first was Roger of Worcester, who observed that he would not belie his conscience by saying, that the cure of souls might be resigned for the sake of pleasing any mortal man. Henry of Winchester, a prince of the royal house, — a man of equal ability and courage, — went further, and declared that such advice was most pernicious; that the rights of the church and the very interests of religion must be overthrown, if the primate set the example of relinquishing his dignity at the pleasure of a king. This day was Saturday; and all that Becket could attain was a delay until Monday, when he promised to answer the royal demand as God should inspire him.\*

We have more than once referred to the lessons of instruction which are to be derived from the events recorded; in no instance are they more impressive than in the present. We read of the most monstrous abuses perpetrated by the crown, yet tamely regarded by all the bishops except one, and that one is singled out for vengeance, not merely by the crown, but by his brother prelates. Their animosity towards him furnishes another illustration of the fatal influence of kings over

\* Authorities: *Quadrilogus. Stephanides, Vita S. Thomæ. Edwardus, Vita ejusdem. Diceto, Imagines Historiarum, necnon Actus Pontificum. Gervase, Chronicon. Bromton, Chronicon. Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici, et Alfordus, Annales Eccles. Angliæ*, almost in the places formerly cited. To these must be added *Epistolæ S. Thomæ*, i. 85. ii. 6. 33. A very good notion of these transactions might also be extracted from a collation of *Lingard* (*History*, vol. ii. p. 67, &c.), with *Turner* (*History*, vol. i. p. 248, &c.), and with *Southey* (*Book of the Church*, i. 160, &c.). But Mr. Turner's general narration of this priest's actions is written in a spirit more opposed to that of the ancient authorities, than any thing we have seen, excepting only *Townsend's* "Accusations."

ecclesiastical affairs. So much were they swayed by court fear or favour, that they did not hesitate to sacrifice their church, their conscience, their religion, to please a tyrant. On contemplating this insulting mockery of justice exhibited at Northampton, every honest mind must be filled with indignation. We behold a succession of charges, utterly unfounded, yet so vexatious and harassing; we see them answered so convincingly, that if one spark of justice, or of honesty, or of courage had slumbered in the breasts of the nobles and prelates, the accused must have been triumphantly and instantly acquitted; we see him condemned in opposition to the clearest evidence, in violation of the laws themselves,—condemned, not by the nobles only, but with even greater readiness by the prelates. If this were the justice to be expected from the royal courts, well might Becket wish to remove the clergy from their jurisdiction. The fact is notorious, that whenever the crown was a party to a suit, justice was not to be expected; that no judge was honest or courageous enough to brave the royal displeasure for the sake of right. Our chroniclers, our rolls of parliament, all our ancient records are filled with complaints that justice was not to be had in the tribunals of the king. It was, probably, this truth which made the primate so hostile to the innovations of Henry: he saw that the judicial fountain was polluted; and he wished to divert the impure stream from the church. In this respect his efforts demand our applause. Had the ecclesiastical tribunals been what they ought to have been, had their chastisements on clerical delinquents been sufficiently severe, that applause would have been unmixed, unqualified, unlimited. From the preceding specimen of Henry's justice nobody will give him credit for very honourable motives in his attempts to reform the judicial system of the church. All that he wanted was, by diverting ecclesiastical causes into his own courts, to derive an increase of revenue from fines. That he

cared not for the merits of any particular case is proved by his conduct in other instances than this. Omitting all disputes between him and his subjects, in which he was sure to gain his cause, we may observe that in suits between subject and subject he was ever ready to interfere where any thing was to be gained. From one of the parties who brought a suit of any importance into his court, he was almost sure to exact a bribe ; he is known to have received overtures from both, and to have withheld his decision until he knew which of the two would offer the most ; and we need scarcely say that in *his* code right was always on the side of him that brought the heaviest purse. Well has it been observed, " Of all the abuses which deformed the Anglo-Norman government, none was so flagitious as the sale of judicial redress. The king, we are often told, is the fountain of justice ; but in those ages it was a fountain which gold only could unseal. From the sale of that justice which any citizen has a right to expect, it was an easy transition to withhold or deny it. Fines were received for the king's help against the adverse suitor ; that is, for perversion of justice or for delay." With such a fact before us, need we wonder that our ancestors were eager to have all their suits decided in the ecclesiastical courts ? *They* have never been charged with such corruption : *their* defect — and a serious one it is — lay in the inadequacy of their penalties, and consequently in their offering incentives to crime. But even this defect was a thousand times less intolerable than those which disgraced the secular courts. A compromise between the two powers was what the interests of the nation required ; but unfortunately, when Becket appeared disposed to surrender the more obnoxious points, the king would hear of no conciliatory proposal. On him, therefore, must rest the almost undivided iniquity of those transactions. He, and in a still greater degree the base prelates, who so readily became his instruments, must be regarded with

execrations so long as honesty and truth are revered by men.\*

At this crisis the menaces of the king were not hidden <sup>1165.</sup> from the archbishop; — the former having distinctly asserted that the same kingdom could not contain them. Having discovered that Becket would not resign, did he wish him to fly? This is unlikely: he well knew with what favour the fugitive would be received by the pope and the French king, and how seriously the three might annoy him. We are, moreover, distinctly informed that the primate's life was menaced, and that it was in imminent peril. From the whole tenor of Henry's conduct, and from several expressions of the contemporary biographers, there can, we think, be no doubt that his resignation or his blood could alone satisfy the monarch; and that he was expected to make his choice. On a former occasion he had given way to fear; now he rose superior to the feeling. He began to act with great firmness and dignity. Seeing himself abandoned by his noble friends, by his knights, by the bishops, who always regulate their smiles or favours by those of the monarch, he sent out his servants into the highways and hedges to collect the lame and the blind, the hungry and the naked, round his table; with such guests he should, he observed, more easily obtain the victory than with those who had so basely deserted him in the hour of need. He felt that he was suffering in a just cause; and this feeling not only ennobled but sanctified all that he did. On the morning of the Monday the courtier bishops again repaired to him, to preach a base submission and to threaten. Having reproached them for their want alike of principle, and of respect to him their spiritual head, he solemnly declared, that even should his body be burnt he would not submit; he would not forsake the flock confided to his charge. Lest we should be ac-

\* Madox, History of the Exchequer, chap. 10. Hume, Hist. Eng. App. 11. Hallam, State of Europe during the Middle Ages, vol. ii. ch.



cused of colouring too deeply the scene which followed, we adopt the words of a most distinguished writer, who is no friend to Becket, but who cannot withhold his admiration at that churchman's conduct on this occasion.\*

"As soon as the bishops left him, he went into the church, and there at St. Stephen's altar performed the mass appointed for that martyr's day, beginning with these words: *Princes sate and spake against me*: and as if this did not sufficiently manifest his readiness to endure martyrdom, he caused a verse of the psalms to be sung, which could not be mistaken as to its intended application: *The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed*. Then, having secretly provided himself with a consecrated wafer, he proceeded to the great council, and at the door took the silver cross from the chaplain, who according to custom was bearing it before him." "Then passing on he entered the assembly and took his seat in silence, holding the cross before him. If Becket at this time actually thought his life in danger, the fate which he afterwards met may prove that the apprehension was not so unreasonable as it might otherwise be deemed. Whether he entertained such fear or not, it was plainly his intention to act as if he did †: should he provoke the blow which he seemed to expect ‡, he was ready to meet it with becoming dignity and characteristic courage: in the more likely case that the unusual manner of his appearance could confuse the king's counsels, something might occur of which he might take advantage. Considering, therefore, Becket's temper and opinions, the measure was as judicious as it was bold. Henry was no sooner informed in what attitude the priest was approaching, then he rose hastily from his seat and retired into an inner room, whither he summoned all the other lords, spiritual and temporal, and complained to them of this act of defiance. The great council, as well as the king, regarded it as a deliberate insult, studied for the purpose of throwing upon them the imputation of some treacherous purpose.§ Henry's violent temper was exasperated to such a pitch, that the archbishop of York trembled for Becket's life, and departed,

\* Southey, *Book of the Church*, vol. i. p. 169, &c. We omit, however, some of the offensive expressions, which are wholly gratuitous.

† There can be no doubt that he both feared, and had reason to fear it.

‡ This calculating policy should not be ascribed to the archbishop; he was above it.

§ This is much too strong; it is not warranted by the original biographers. The passage is evidently taken from Gervase (*Chronica*, 1392.), but we are nowhere informed that the great council expressed such an opinion.

with his chaplain, dreading what might ensue. The bishop of Exeter hastened fearfully to the primate, and besought him to have pity on himself and his brethren, who were all in danger of perishing on his account.\* Becket, eyeing him with stern contempt, replied, 'Fly then! thou canst not understand the things which are of God.' And he remained unmoved, holding the cross, and awaiting what might befall. His part was not difficult after it had once been taken: the straight path is always easy. But Henry was thoroughly perplexed. The general sense of the great council, was, that the primate's present conduct was an affront to the king and the peers; that Henry had drawn it on himself by elevating such a person to that high and unmerited station; and that, for ingratitude and breach of fealty, Becket ought to be impeached of perjury and high treason.† Not from moderation, but with the hope of avoiding the embarrassments which he foresaw in that mode of proceeding, Henry rejected their opinion, and reverting to his pecuniary charges, sent to demand of the primate whether upon that matter he would stand to the judgment of the court. Becket peremptorily refused, and it was then again proposed to attain him. But the bishops dared not proceed to this, because he had appealed to the pope; and they knew the power of the Roman see too well not to be fearful of offending it. They besought the king that he would let them appeal to Rome against the primate, on the score of his perjury; promising, that if they might be excused from concurring with the temporal lords in the sentence which was to be past, they would use their utmost endeavours for persuading the pope to depose him from the primacy. The king unwillingly consented: upon which they repaired to Becket, and pronouncing him guilty of perjury at having broken his fealty, they renounced their obedience to him, placed themselves under the pope's protection against him, and cited him before the pope to answer the accusation. His only reply was, 'I hear what you say!' He could not have had any thing more conformable to his own views and wishes.‡ The prelates then took their seats in the opposite side of the hall.§ Meantime the temporal peers pronounced him guilty of perjury and treason; and leaving the inner chamber, where their resolution had been passed, came to notify it to the accused. The alter-

\* The bishop added, that the king had threatened with death the first man who should speak in behalf of Becket.

† To us, this by no means appears to have been the *general* impression; it was merely that of Becket's more violent enemies, or, rather, of Henry's more resolute flatterers.

‡ Why so? what could be the views and wishes of one to whom the next moment might be the last of his life?

§ "Episcopis loco et animo sedentibus ex adverso."—*Gervase*.

native, however, of rendering his accounts and discharging the balance \*, was still to be allowed him; and Leicester, as chief justiciary, called upon him to come before the king and do this, — ‘otherwise,’ said he, ‘hear your sentence.’ ‘My sentence!’ exclaimed Becket, rising from his seat: ‘Nay, sir earl, hear me first! You are not ignorant how faithfully, according to the things of this world, I served my lord the king, in consideration of which service it pleased him to raise me to the primacy, — God knows, against my will, for I knew my own unfitness, and rather for love of him than of God, consented; which is this day sufficiently made evident, seeing that God withdraws from me both himself and the king also. It was asked at my election, in presence of prince Henry, unto whom that charge had been committed, in what manner I was given to the church: and the answer, free and discharged from all bonds of the court. Being therefore thus free and discharged, I am not bound to answer concerning these things, nor will I.’ The earl here observed, that this reply was very different from what had before been given. ‘Listen, my son!’ Becket pursued. ‘Inasmuch as the soul is of more worth than the body, by so much more are you bound to obey God and me, rather than an earthly king. Neither by law nor reason, is it allowed that children should judge or condemn their father. Wherefore, I disdain the king’s judgment and yours, and that of all the other peers, — being only to be judged, under God, by our lord the pope, to whom I here appeal before you all, committing the church of Canterbury, my order and dignity, with all thereunto appertaining, to God’s protection and to his. In like manner, my brethren and fellow-bishops, you who have chosen to obey man rather than God, I cite you before the presence of our lord the pope! And, thus relying on the authority of the catholic church, and of the apostolic see, I depart hence!’ As he was leaving the hall, a clamour was raised against him, and some there were reproached him as a perjured traitor †; upon which he looked fiercely round, and said with a loud voice, that were it not forbidden by his holy orders, he would defend himself by arms against those who dared thus to accuse him.” ‡

The dignity exhibited by Becket in this trying scene, his unshaken magnanimity and courage, must have made

\* A curious alternative! Where was the 45,000 marks (full 300,000*l.* of our present money) to be raised by one who was notoriously poor, who had nothing with which to pay the preceding fines.

† Some courtiers threw knotted straw, taken from the floor, at the departing prelate.

‡ The above graphic relation is in some respects too unfavourable to the primate: the imputations were not warranted by any of the contemporary biographers.

a deep impression on most of the nobles and prelates. Whether any attempts were made to detain him, has been disputed: he found the door of the hall locked, and the porter away from his post. In one relation we are told that the keys were suspended from the wall; in another, that, through the representation made to the king, that if the blood of Becket stained the floor of his palace, the royal name must for ever be held in execration, Henry permitted him to depart.\* Both versions are probably true, and both prove what has generally been overlooked,—that the primate's destruction had been seriously resolved. In fact one authority distinctly informs us, that several of the courtiers had bound themselves by oath to assassinate him; and this is confirmed by the language of some bishops, and by the precipitation with which Roger of York summoned his clergy to leave the hall, that they might not witness the tragical deed he expected to follow. Outside the gate he found the poor, his only faithful companions, who accompanied him in triumph to his hostel. He now sent three messengers to the king, requesting permission to leave the country; the reply was, that he should receive a decision on the morrow. There was a general impression that he would not see the light of another sun: two knights secretly introduced themselves to his hostel, and put him on his guard. His first care was to order a bed to be prepared beside the altar of the church; but, reflecting that the sanctuary would probably be little respected by such a king, and no doubt remembering the fate of St. Stanislas of Poland, who a short time before had been cut down at the very altar by order of king Boleslas, he resolved that very night to flee. As if to favour his flight, the darkness was thick: at midnight, accompanied by one or two clerical attendants, he silently issued from the postern, and hastened towards Lincolnshire, hiding himself by day,

\* "Cumque immanis existeret tumultus, suggestum est regi sempiternæ illi ignominie fore, si intra aulam suam sineret archiepiscopum discerpi. Itaque rex jussit illum illæsum dimitti."—*Edward Grimrod*, p. 358. J

and resuming his journey when men were wrapt in sleep. After fifteen days of perils and fatigues, he landed at Gravelines in Flanders."\*

- 1165, Whether the possessions of Becket were *instantly*  
 1166. seized, and his faithful clergy punished, is doubtful; one contemporary authority asserts, another with more reason denies, that this was done. From two of Becket's epistles we perceive, among other proofs of Henry's vindictive temper, that these acts of violence were certainly perpetrated; but we do not think that they were immediate. By the king of France the fugitive was received with high distinction, notwithstanding a previous embassy from England, with a request that he would not harbour that traitor, "the late archbishop." "Who has deposed him?" was the natural question. "I am a king," pursued he, "no less than my brother of England, yet I would not have deposed the humblest ecclesiastic in my dominions; nor do I think I have the power to do so. I knew this Thomas when he was chancellor; long and faithfully did he serve your king; yet, in recompence, your master, after driving him from England, would also expel him from France!" These sentiments do honour to Louis VII.; but we may believe that policy had also some concern in the embassy he sent to pope Alexander, with a request that the archbishop might be supported against the English tyrant. Here, too, Henry's ambassadors had preceded the arrival of Becket. The court of Alexander was at Sens (Rome was in the possession of an antipope), and golden arguments had prejudiced several of the cardinals in favour of the monarch. At first, the archbishop was coldly received by all the sacred college except the pope, who had too much honour to abandon one that had

\* *Quadrilogus*, lib. i. cap. 27—33. & lib. ii. cap. 1—6. *Edwardus*, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 358. *Epistolæ S. Thomæ*, lib. i. & ii. (variis epist.). *Stephanides*, *Vita ejusdem*, p. 38—48. *Radulfus de Diceto*, *Imagines Historiarum*, p. 537. *Gervase*, *Chronica*, p. 139, &c., *nonnulli Actus Pontificum*, p. 1671. (apud Twysden, *Decem Scriptores*). *Baronius*, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, et *Alfordus*, *Annales Eccles. Angliæ*, A. D. 1164. *Southey*, *Book of the Church*, ubi supra.

suffered so much for the sake of the church, and too much wisdom to let such a defender sink under secular violence or ecclesiastical corruption. Becket had no doubt condemned the whole system of secular investiture ; his conscience now took alarm at the way in which he had been introduced into the prelacy : he had not entered the door of Christ's fold, but been forced over the wall ; and, in this feeling, he solemnly resigned, in presence of the papal court, the episcopal ring into the hands of Alexander, whom he exhorted to nominate a fit successor. Probably he wished by this means to end the dispute with Henry, and restore peace to the English church ; and several cardinals thought the opportunity for that purpose ought not to pass : but Alexander observed, that if he were permitted to fall, all other bishops must expect to fall with him, and he was immediately reinvested with the dignity by the tradition of the same ring. The Constitutions of Clarendon were of such a nature, that even the corrupted cardinals could no longer forsake him : his cause was declared to be that of religion, and of the church ; and a resolution was made to support him. To the abbot of Pontigny, a Cistercian, he was confided by the pope, and advised to bear poverty with the humility becoming his present condition, until God should give an issue to the contest. Of that rigid order he immediately assumed the habit ; and, by his austerities, proved that he could with ease reconcile himself to his lot. This conduct of the pope gave a new impulse to the fury of Henry ; yet he dreaded while he hated. Treason was denounced against any person who should bring into England, whether from the pontiff or the archbishop, letters of excommunication, interdicts, or any other ecclesiastical censures. It was at this time that the estates of Becket appear to have been confiscated : his name was erased from the liturgy ; the revenues of all the clergymen who had followed him into France, or lent him money, or testified sympathy in his sufferings, were seized ; and, in a spirit truly satanic, were involved, not only all who

were connected with him by blood or friendship, but their families, without distinction of rank or sex or age, in the same promiscuous sentence of confiscation and banishment. "Neither men leaning under the weight of years, nor infants still hanging at the breast, were excepted. The list of proscription was swelled with 400 names; and the misfortune of the sufferers was aggravated by the obligation of an oath to visit the archbishop, and importune him with the history of their wrongs. Day after day, crowds of exiles besieged the door of his cell at Pontigny: his heart was wrung with anguish; he implored the compassion of his friends; and enjoyed at last the satisfaction of knowing that the wants of those blameless victims had been amply relieved by the benefactions of the king of France, the queen of Sicily, and the pope." Never, it will be conceded, was vengeance more refined than this: the tale is written in brass; and it will remain, while time shall last, to brand the memory of this vicious monarch.\* Nor did the exile long remain at Pontigny: unless he were expelled, the tyrant threatened to banish all the Cistercians in England. With the same dignified superiority, Louis offered him for a residence the city of Sens, which the pope had just left for Rome; — a step that must have added immeasurably to the mortification of Henry. Here he led the same ascetic and reclusive life; and we soon perceive that his understanding was tinged by his new habits. From this time we no longer find the calm, dignified archbishop; we see only the excited monk. This unfortunate change in his habits, opinions, and feelings, — a change which partly led to the subsequent tragedy — is very candidly admitted by the distinguished Roman catholic historian we have so frequently quoted.

\* Mr. Southey, whose heart is always right, however prejudices may occasionally mislead his mind, — we at least think he has prejudices, — observes, with equal force and feeling: — "It (Henry's conduct in this respect) admits of no palliation; and, indeed, next to the guilt of those who commit wicked actions, is that of the historian who glosses over or excuses them." (Book of the Church, i. 183.) We invite Mr. Turner's attention to this striking passage.

“ Withdrawing himself from company and amusements, he divided the whole of his time between prayer and reading. His choice of books was determined by a reference to the circumstances in which he was placed; and in the canon law, the histories of the martyrs, and the holy scriptures, he sought for advice and consolation. On a mind naturally firm and unbending, such studies were likely to make a very powerful impression; and his friends, dreading the consequences, endeavoured to direct his attention to other objects. But their remonstrances were fruitless. Gradually, his opinions became tinged with enthusiasm: he identified his cause with that of God and the church: concession appeared to him like apostacy; and his resolution was fixed to bear any privation, and to sacrifice, if it were necessary, even his own life, in so sacred a contest. The violence of Henry nourished and strengthened these sentiments; and at last, urged by the cries of the sufferers, the archbishop assumed a bolder tone, which terrified his enemies and compelled the court of Rome to come forward in his behalf.”\*

That tone was, indeed, a bold one. Having watched one night before the shrine of St. Drancio, another before that of St. Gregory the Great, a third before that of the Virgin, he prepared to hurl the thunders of the church against his enemies. On Whit-sunday he preached; and when the service was concluded, the bells tolled, the crosses were inverted, twelve priests holding torches were ranged round him, and the doom of excommunication was solemnly pronounced against John, bishop of Oxford; against the archdeacon of Poitiers; against those individuals who held his sequestered goods; against Josceline de Baliol, and the chief justiciary; against all who should lay hands on the possessions of the church. The torches were then dashed to the ground: the Constitutions of Clarendon were next read and condemned; whoever enforced or observed them

\* Lingard, History of England, ii. 78. This writer has been often abused for want of candour. It would be well if some of those who are loudest in that abuse, would be as candid as he is. With his religious opinions we have nothing to do: we speak of him merely as the historian from the earliest period of our history down to the accession of Henry VII. We have followed him step by step, and we take great pleasure in bearing evidence to his fidelity. Of his work *subsequent* to Henry, we presume not to speak. Though we have frequently perused that portion, we have not attempted to verify the citations, — a herculean labour, but necessary to be undertaken by every one who would act the part of a *competent* or an *honest* critic.



was declared excommunicate ; and all who had sworn to their observance were absolved from their oath. In the conclusion, Henry himself was admonished that, without immediate repentance, the same doom would be passed on him. He would no doubt have met it — as, indeed, he richly deserved it — on the present occasion, had not Becket been informed that he lay indisposed. Still more dreadful would have been the interdict, which Henry fully expected would be laid on the whole kingdom, and which, beyond doubt, would have raised the people against him. To prevent this probable catastrophe, as well as the reception of the comminatory letters, orders were given that every passenger arriving from beyond sea should be searched ; \* that all letters from the pope or the archbishop should be seized, and the bearer, if a layman, be put to death ; if an ecclesiastic, mutilated ; and that, if ever the letters reached the country, the priest, who, in obedience to the censures, refused to celebrate mass, should be castrated ! \*

1166 Into the endless and complicated, and not very in-  
to telligible transactions at the Roman court, or between  
1170. this irascible monarch and his exiled subject, we cannot enter. We may observe, that his golden arguments appear long to have kept the pope in a sort of vacillating neutrality ; — not that Alexander was within reach of corruption, but his advisers certainly were ; and for this reason Becket stigmatised that court as venal and prostitute. Legates were sometimes appointed to negotiate between the heads of the two powers, and appeals frequently allowed by the monarch to the papal court ; but nothing was gained beyond time, — if that can be called gain which embittered an animosity already too deeply seated to be removed. An interview between Becket and Henry, in presence of the French king, was

\* *Quadrilogus*, lib. ii. cap. 9—16. *Stephanides*, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 48, &c. *Edwardus*, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 358. (apud *Surium*, *De Probatis Sanctorum Vitis*, die Decemb. xxix.). *Epistolæ ejusdem*, lib. i. et ii. (in multis locis). *Gervase*, *Chronica*, p. 1397—1409. (apud *Twysden*, *Decem Script.*). *Baronius*, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, necnon *Alfordus*, *Annales Eccles. Ang.* (sub annis). *Capgravius*, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. cclxxxvii. *Liu-gard*, *History of England*, ubi supra.

equally unavailing. At length, the pope, who honourably endeavoured to be a mediator, left the archbishop to adopt more decisive measures. Becket, who had little of the coolness required in a position so critical, — whose characteristic was not discretion, but intemperate zeal, rendered more fiery by personal resentment, — excommunicated so many of Henry's attendants, that the court was literally filled with them. With the terrors of an interdict over his head, Henry again consented to an interview, at which the papal nuncios were present; yet, when the terms of reconciliation were settled, he refused to give the customary kiss of peace. It was evident that he could never forgive the archbishop; that his offers of reconciliation were the offspring of fear, and that harmony thus forced must be of very temporary duration. Indeed, throughout these transactions, he showed quite as much duplicity as violence. A third time the same pressing necessity brought the two into contact. This meeting — in every respect remarkable — took place in a spacious meadow near Freitville, in Touraine. As if no dissension had ever taken place between them, Henry rode to meet the archbishop, drew him aside, and conversed familiarly with him. He professed his resolution to punish the traitors who had embroiled both; and used so much apparent candour, that for the moment even Becket was duped. In the gratitude of his heart, the latter dismounted and threw himself at his sovereign's feet; Henry insisted that he should remount, and held his stirrup, observing, "My lord archbishop, let us renew our former affection for each other! All that I want is, that you will show me honour before the men who are now witnessing what passes." And when he returned to his retinue, he declared that he found the prelate in the best possible disposition; and that, if he did not heartily correspond to such good-will, he should be the worst of men. With the same facility he agreed to the requests, which were certainly but reasonable, of Becket, — that he would

restore his favour to the primate and his friends, and surrender the possessions of the church of Canterbury. In return, the primate promised all love and honour due by a prelate to his sovereign. But that he should have been for a moment deceived, appears to us surprising: the facility with which the outward reconciliation was effected, was most suspicious; the king, though he had promised the kiss of peace, still refused to give it; and every circumstance that occurred, tended to confirm the reviving apprehensions of the primate. Months elapsed before orders were sent to restore the lands of the church; and when at length they were despatched, it was found that the rents had been levied, the cattle driven, the corn carried away, the buildings left in a dilapidated state, so that on every side desolation reigned. There had evidently been wanton waste, as well as shameless rapacity. The men to whom the king had granted the lands, had fully shared the royal animosity; one of them had even threatened to murder the archbishop, should he ever set his foot in England. There were threats, too, from other parts: the courtiers perceived that the king's dislike was fierce as ever; that they were at liberty to persecute the primate as they pleased. His bitterest enemies were the bishops, some of whom he had excommunicated. But his soul was undaunted; he resolved to return to his flock, from which, as he truly said, he had been absent too long. The letter which he wrote to the king on this occasion was pathetic; it concludes, "It was my wish to have waited on you once more; but necessity constrains me, in my humbled state, to revisit my afflicted church. I go, sire, with your permission, perhaps to perish for it, unless you protect me: but whether I live or die, yours I am, and yours I shall ever be, in the Lord. Whatever happen to me or mine, God bless you and your children!" There was rashness in the design. Well had it been for him had he taken the advice of king Louis, who plainly foresaw that mischief was intended, and advised him to remain in

France : " God's will be done ! " was his reply. To the bishop of Paris he said, " Vado in Anglia mori." On his way to the coast, however, he again saw Henry, who carefully refrained from giving him the kiss of peace ; a circumstance that naturally added to the apprehensions which had lately assailed him. He expressed some vague alarm, while his enquiring eye sought the king's : Henry felt the meaning, and quickly replied, " Do you think me a traitor ? " Whether the primate was reassured by the question, we know not ; but if he had a momentary faith in the royal sincerity, it was soon to be dissipated. Henry promised to meet him again at Rouen, to provide him with money for the payment of his debts, and for the expenses of his journey. At Rouen, however, he found neither king nor money ; but John of Oxford, his personal enemy, was charged to accompany him to England. Three hundred pounds were lent to him by the archbishop of that city, and with that sum he commenced his journey. He had in his possession letters of excommunication from the pope against the archbishop of York, and the bishops of London and Salisbury, the chief instigators of the late troubles ; but he appears to have had no intention of publishing them, unless new provocations should arise. He ought not, however, to have been entrusted with such formidable weapons ; he had not the command of temper necessary for his situation ; and he was, most injudiciously, not only made to arbitrate in his own cause, but armed with powers for enforcing whatever his personal resentment might dictate. How true is the observation, that in most human disputes both parties are in the wrong ! — if not in an equal degree, certainly with equal infirmity of nature. The sequel soon showed how unfit the primate was to be entrusted with the letters. At Whitsand, on the French coast, where he abode for some time, he heard that the excommunicated prelates intended to oppose his landing, and he resolved not to withhold the publication of the censures. Though they were his mortal enemies, and unprincipled as they

were vengeful, this is a poor apology for his own want of discretion. He should have remembered, that his chief duty was the restoration of peace ; that his enemies were on the watch to take advantage of his well-known failing ; that they were unprincipled and daring ; and that, unless his conduct was regulated by the soundest and coolest views, he might do more injury than good to the cause he advocated. In the heat of his resentment, however, he despatched a trusty agent, with the obnoxious communications ; and their publication naturally added to the irritation of all his enemies. It seemed, indeed, to his own friends, as if his sole object were to spread dissension and hatred throughout the realm ; — that he came, not with peace, but a sword. But he had no vindictive feelings : if he was irritable, he was not revengeful ; and perhaps the enthusiastic sentiments which had animated him since his retirement at Pontigny, were as much in fault as his own infirmity of temper. Before he left Whitsand he had reason to know that his life was in danger. From the relation of the monk Herbert, one of his companions in this journey, we learn that he was warned by a message from the count of Boulogne not to sail over ; that on the other side armed men were waiting for his blood, or to put him in chains. He declared, that if he were sure of being torn to pieces, he would go. At the same time a vessel coming from England, the sailors were asked, what was the popular feeling respecting the return of the primate ? They replied, what was no doubt true, if we except a certain party, that his return would be hailed with joy by the country. One of them, however, who had more specific information, strongly advised the archbishop and his suite not to make the dangerous experiment : he confirmed the relation of the count, and added, that he had his information from a good source. The prelate persisted. That he was not ignorant of his peril, appears from the letter which, from the same port, he wrote to Henry. In it he complains that none of the royal promises had been fulfilled ; that every day Ranulf de

Broc, minister of prince Henry, committed greater depredations on the domains of the church. He adds, "The same Ranulf has boasted, in the hearing of many, that we shall not long enjoy your favour; and that we shall not eat a single loaf of bread (so he threatens) in England before we are deprived of life."—"What could this Ranulf effect, unless he depended on your will, and were armed with your authority?"\*

Early in December, Becket landed at Sandwich, the 1170. inhabitants of which, being his vassals, did not fail to receive him with acclamation. In all ages, the church has been a most beneficent landlord; and this truth the vassals had bitterly felt during the recent usurpation of the lay barons. Scarcely was he landed, when he had proof enough of the accuracy of the information he had received. The sheriff of Kent, whom he had excommunicated, at the head of a select body of horsemen, with armour under their tunics, advanced in a menacing attitude. Accompanied by Ranulf de Broc, by Reginald de Warenne, by the three suspended bishops, their allies and friends,—all excommunicated by Becket, all his personal enemies,—they had proceeded to Dover, to await his arrival, when hearing that he was steering towards Sandwich—*correptis armis, cum festinatione nimia, Sandicum petierunt.* What was their object? *To kill him!* is the deliberate assertion of several contemporary writers; and of Thomas himself, in his last letter to the pope. But they were disappointed; the people collected in a multitude, well armed, to protect their feudal superior; and his enemies were compelled to temporise. John of Oxford, indeed, commanded them, in the king's name, not to injure either the primate or his followers; but such a command he might easily give, when, from the number and resolution of the vassals, open violence was impossible. Disappointed of their purpose, they reproached him with excommunicating the friends of the king, whose

\* The same authorities, immediately following the last citations.

vengeance they denounced against him. At Canterbury, he was received with unbounded acclamation; the poor, the peasantry, the clergy, — all who had suffered by the recent rapacity — inspired by gratitude, love, and personal attachment, hastened to do him honour. His enemies, however, would not suffer him to approach prince Henry, who had been recently crowned, and who was then at Woodstock: he was ordered not to enter any of the royal towns or castles, but to remain within the precincts of his cathedral. When the people ran eagerly to meet him, by royal proclamation all were declared traitors who should hereafter approach him. In his retirement the primate was incessant in his devotions, in his reading, in the other duties of his station; but his situation was one of peril, and consequently of alarm. His provisions were intercepted; his property was plundered; his servants were beaten and insulted; and every day brought to his ears the open menaces or the dark conspiracies of his enemies. He was persuaded that his last hour was approaching. With this impression he wrote to the pope, whose prayers he requested, as the sword of death was hanging over him. In the same feeling he told his clergy that the contest must end with blood, but that he was ready to die for the church. To the abbot of Leicester he expressed his conviction that the king would not rest until his doom was fixed. In the same feeling, too, on Christmas-day, he preached to the people. He observed, that one of their archbishops had been a martyr; and that they would probably soon see another. He had, in fact, just made an ineffectual attempt by his messengers to procure the favour of prince Henry, who had recently been crowned by the archbishop of York; for such had been their reception, that they had barely been able to escape with their lives. But, with all his well-founded apprehensions, he lost nothing of his severity. After the conclusion of his discourse, to avenge the wrongs which his church had experienced during so many years, he solemnly excommunicated

by name three powerful barons. Thus, to the last, did this great but misguided man persist in a career which had already made him so many enemies, and which could not fail to exasperate them even to frenzy. Let us not, however, forget, that with all its impetuosity, his was a noble mind; and that even in his errors he has claim to our respect.\*

In the mean time, the suspended prelates hastened 1170. to Normandy, to inspire the king with the same thirst of vengeance, — *linguas suas*, says Bromton, *ut gladium exacerunt*. What passed at the interview, or, we may rather say, succession of interviews, cannot with certainty be known. In general terms we are informed that they did all they could to excite the wrath of the king. But two or three expressions have been preserved which may throw some light on this dark subject. The king asked the prelates what was to be done: they replied, that it was not for them to advise. One of them added, that so long as Becket lived there would be no peace either for Henry or his people. That the king perfectly understood the import of the words, is evident from the exclamation, “Of the thankless cowards who eat my bread, will not one rid me of this turbulent priest?” He, too, was understood. Four knights, Reginald Fitzurse, William Tracy, Hugh de Mowville, and Richard Brito, instantly bound themselves by oath to fulfil the royal pleasure, and that very night set out for Canterbury. Passing the straits with considerable speed, they repaired to the neighbourhood of that city, to concert with the Brocs, at Saltwood, the details of the dark tragedy. Having collected a number of forces to quell the resistance of Becket’s knights, of the clergy, and of the citizens, they proceeded to the

\* Authorities:—*Epistolæ S. Thomæ*, lib. v. (*variis epistolis*). *Stephanides*, *Vita ejusdem*, p. 707, &c. *Quadrilogus*, lib. iii. cap. 1—10. *Edwardus*, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 359. *Wilkins*, *Concilia*, p. 465. *Gervase*, *Chronicon*, p. 1413, &c.; *neon Actus Pontificum*, p. 1672. (*apud Twysden*, *Decem Scriptores*). *Baronius*, *Annales Eccles.*; *neon Alfordus*, *Annales Eccles. Angliæ* (sub anno 1170). *Capgravius*, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. cclxxxix.



monastery of St. Augustine's, the abbot of which was of the king's party. From thence, on the fifth day after their departure from Normandy, they entered the palace of the primate, and without ceremony seated themselves on the floor. How to commence the affair was no easy matter. At length Fitzurse said, that they came with a message from the king, and asked him whether he would hear it in public or in private. The reply was, just as they pleased; and when they intimated that they wished the conference to be private, he ordered his attendants to withdraw. From the manner, however, of Fitzurse, the porter suspected mischief, and immediately threw open the door, that all who were in the next apartment might see and hear what passed. Being thus compelled to use some management, Reginald ordered him, in the king's name, to absolve the excommunicated prelates. — The dispute which followed is too long and too uninteresting to be reported. The substance of Becket's replies was, that he had published the papal letters with the royal consent; that he could not absolve the archbishop of York, whose case was reserved for the pope alone; but that he would willingly remove the censures from the other bishops, if they would engage by oath to obey the determination of the church. The words on both sides were warm: three of the knights had formerly sworn fealty to Becket when chancellor, and in allusion to this circumstance he expressed his surprise that they should thus threaten him. They replied, that they would do more than threaten, and descended into the court-yard, where they armed. While his attendants loudly expressed their alarm, he remained as cool and collected as if no danger were near. The voices of the monks, who were then at vespers, fell on their ears, and with much difficulty they bore him along with them through the cloisters, in the hope that the church would be a place of security. While slowly following his cross, some of his attendants, to make that security the greater, were proceeding to fasten the gates; but,

with his usual magnanimity, he ordered them to be thrown open, observing, that the house of God was not to be fortified like a castle; that he came there not to fight, but to suffer. In the mean time the knights, attended by twelve other ruffians, had broken into the palace, and not finding him there, followed him to the church. He had passed the northern transept, and was ascending the steps of the choir, when they rushed in with drawn swords. Even now, as darkness was at hand (it was the 29th or perhaps 30th day of December), he might easily have hid himself in some crypt, or escaped altogether; but in natural intrepidity he had never a superior; and in mind he evidently aspired to the crown of martyrdom. A voice exclaimed, "Where is the traitor?" but no answer was returned. Reginald then cried out, "Where is the archbishop?" Hearing these words, he descended the steps, saying, "Here am I, an archbishop indeed, but no traitor, ready to suffer in the name of my Redeemer!" They again demanded the absolution of the bishops. "Never!" was the reply, "until they make satisfaction."—"Then die!" said Fitzurse. "Reginald," said the primate, "I have done thee many favours — what is thy object? If my life be sought, be it so; but I command you, in the name of God, not to hurt one of my people!" Reginald seized him by the mantle, to drag him out, and put him to death in some less holy place; but he would not be moved. Reginald then aimed a blow at his head; his cross bearer, Edward Grimes — well does the faithful creature, the only one who had not fled, deserve that his name should be remembered by posterity — interposed his arm; it was cut off, and the blow wounded the primate on the crown. Feeling the blood flow, he bowed in the attitude of prayer, exclaiming, "To God, to St. Mary, to the holy patrons of this church, and to St. Denis, I commend myself and the church's cause!" A second blow brought him on his knees; a third, on his face before the altar of St. Benedict; but he had still composure enough to draw

his robes around him, and to clasp his hands in prayer. Successive blows soon deprived him of his life; and one of the conspirators, drawing out his brains with the point of the sword, scattered them over the pavement.\*

Thus perished one of the most extraordinary men of the middle ages. The manner in which he met his fate; his indomitable courage; his unbending dignity; his perfect reliance on the justice of his cause, have called forth the admiration of mankind. Of his character, a sufficient estimate may be formed from the preceding sketch. We have seen that it was widely different at different periods; that before his conversion he appears to have been an unscrupulous instrument of the royal will, and seriously intent on nothing beyond the preservation of his sovereign's favour; that after that event he ran into the opposite extreme — of obstinacy in resisting his will. Endowed with a commanding genius, and, from his elevation to the primacy, with virtues of a very high order, his influence could not fail to be great. We believe it would in most cases have been salutarily exercised, had Henry been of a different character; but when he found that the royal object was not merely to reform, but to enslave and corrupt the church, he resolved to resist every innovation. In this his only excuse is to be found in the spirit of the age. A more interesting consideration regards the circumstances that led to his fate. We have related them with perfect freedom from bias; but have thought it our duty to display some facts which have either been wholly overlooked, or very imperfectly regarded by preceding writers. Though the reader must already have divined our opinion, we will devote

\* Authorities: — Stephanides, *Vita S. Thomæ*, p. 78—87. Edwardus, *Vita ejusdem*, p. 360. (apud Surium, tom. iv.). *Quadriologus*, lib. iii. cap. 10—18. *Epistolæ S. Thomæ*, lib. v. (in ultimis epist.). Gervase, *Chronicon*, p. 1414—1417; necnon *Actus Pontificum*, 1073. (apud Twysden). Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, tom. xii. A. D. 1170. Allfordus, *Annales Eccles. Angl.* tom. iv. (eodem anno). Capgravius, *Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. cclxxxx.

a few additional observations to the subject. — Who authorised, perhaps instigated, the knights to their deed of blood? To suppose that, unless they were fully aware of the royal wishes, they would undertake its commission, is monstrous. *They* had received no provocation from the priest; on the contrary, three of them had eaten of his bread, had lived in his household, and shared his bounty; their object, therefore, was to please the king, who they believed could protect them against the vengeance of the church. As we are taking a view of the case which preceding writers have been unwilling to contemplate, we are the more anxious to state the grounds of an inference which, however novel, is to us irresistible. Let us for a moment revert to previous transactions. All authorities agree that, if Becket had not given way at Clarendon, his blood would have been spilt; that the executioners were ready for the deed. At Northampton he is allowed, by two contemporary writers, to have been in equal danger; and that the catastrophe was only averted by his flight. At the pretended reconciliation, all agree that the king constantly refused to give him the kiss of peace. If the king had no ulterior views, would he have so obstinately withstood the pledge of reconciliation? We have seen the alarm of king Louis; the apprehension of the archbishop; the hasty, and, as we may infer, confused reply of Henry when the searching and suspicious eyes of the primate expressed, even more strongly than words, what was passing within. And what are we to think of the reconciliation itself? Why should Henry all at once abandon pretences which, during six years, he had so vigorously defended against the whole church? When, in addition, we take into account his profound dissimulation, are we rash in concluding that his concessions were too sudden, and too easily made, to be sincere? And why was the primate subjected to the society of his personal enemy, John of Oxford, especially after it had been arranged that the archbishop of

Rouen should accompany him to England? Again, what made the sheriff of Kent, Ranulf de Broc, and the three bishops, — all five filled with deadly hatred to the archbishop, and four at least of the five infamous for their crimes, — hasten with armed men to the beach at Dover, which they are described as pacing with equal impatience and fury, while waiting for his arrival? Who told them to be in readiness at the very place where he had intended to disembark, and at the very time? How explain the warning of the count of Boulogne, and the English mariner? how, the emphatic letter which Becket wrote from Whitsand to the king, relative to the conduct of De Broc, and the threatening aspect of things? Why the boast of the minister that the royal favour and the primate's life would be short? He, the sheriff of Kent, and the bishops, must have known that the recent reconciliation was only a feint to lure him into the hands of the king: if they had admitted the bare possibility of its being sincere on the part of Henry, *would* they have dared thus to meet their sovereign's friend? What was their object in hastening with such a formidable and hostile array to that point? "Nescio quid," says Gervase: it certainly could not be for the mere purpose of seizing by force the papal excommunications, for they had been already delivered to them, — a fact which most modern historians have overlooked: we may add, that on such men that censure would have had no influence whatever. That the object was an important one, appears from their anxiety and manner: "Die crastinâ, dum furibundi littora circuit, quasi archiepiscopum applicantem apprehendere, ipse Spiritu Sancti quo regebatur edoctus, navem ascendit, et eorum devitans nequitiam, prospero cursu in portu Sandwico applicuit." We have related with what rapidity they proceeded to Sandwich, and how, finding the people collected in a multitude to defend the archbishop, they were compelled to desist from their purpose. Of his unvarying presentiment that evil fate awaited him, we

are assured by every contemporary writer, by his own epistles, by the general impression of the times. After his return to England it naturally acquired new strength. Omitting the reports of conspiracy which daily reached his ears, let us revert to a most important fact, — the order from the young Henry to remain within the precincts of his cathedral. By royal proclamation, the man who should presume to look upon him or any of his suite with favour, was declared an enemy of the king: and because the priests of the London churches, and many of the citizens, had advanced to meet him, they were compelled to give bail in the royal courts to answer for the charge of receiving the king's enemy. Why this precipitancy to place him beyond the pale of the law — to isolate him at once from the assistance and the sympathy of men? Another consideration peculiarly forces itself on the mind. Prince Henry, though crowned, was but a boy: would he, of his own authority, still less, would his attendants have incurred the responsibility of proclaiming a public enemy, — the enemy of the king, — the very man who had just been reconciled to that king? It is impossible to doubt that both the authority and the injunction to such a step had arrived from Normandy. Add to all this, the conference of the suspended bishops with the king, — the portentous meaning of the sentences which we have before recorded, — let us not forget that the king is represented by two authorities as *frequently* expressing the same culpable wish for the archbishop's removal — and the precipitate departure of the four knights, and what are we to conclude? From a careful and unbiassed investigation of contemporary authorities, from the character of the parties concerned, from the *aggregate* connection of the circumstances on which we have dwelt in the course of this biographical sketch — for *singly*, each, however suspicious, would not make a strong impression on the mind; — from all the circumstantial evidence, we are unwillingly compelled to draw this conclusion, — *that the murder of Becket was deliberately planned, and that the*

*guilt must rest on Henry Plantagenet.* We are, indeed, told by contemporary writers, that his words, "will nobody rid me of this turbulent priest?"—were the passionate exclamation of the moment; that he did not intend the catastrophe which followed; that the knights left the court, not only without his permission, but without his knowledge. In reply we ask, who told them that the king was not privy to the design? They relate what passed at that conference from common report—*ut fertur*—and they have no other authority for the statement beyond the assertion of the king himself, who, to avert the consequences of the act, would not want such palliatives as his policy could invent. But for their forbearance on this point there is reason enough. If they do not openly charge him with the deed, that they had their *suspicious* is evident from several expressions which, however cautious, are full of meaning. Let us remember that *several* of them wrote during Henry's own life; *all* of them in his reign or that of his sons. Would they dare to call him a murderer to his face? Or would they tell his sons that their father had been one? For a similar reason, the charge could not be made during the dynasty of the Plantagenets. Henry, it may be said, voluntarily swore before the papal legates that he was innocent of instigating the assassins; but little weight will attach to this plea, when we consider his character. That neither with him nor his courtiers, oaths were any great obstacles to the attainment of his views, is undoubted: on two or three occasions we know that he swore, and authorised others to swear, to the truth of that which he and they knew to be false.\* Towards his excul-

\* We give one example. In the diet at Wurtzburg, his ambassadors swore that he disclaimed Alexander, and recognised the authority of the rival pope; and, in consequence, the adhesion of England to the cause of the anti-pope was not only announced to Germany by an imperial edict, but to Alexander himself by an eye-witness. The king made his envoys deny the act, and sent that convenient instrument, John of Oxford, to Rome, to swear that they had taken no such oath. In the presence of Alexander, John did not hesitate to swear as he had been ordered.

pation the bare oath in question proves nothing. Some other reflections naturally ally themselves to the same subject, and range themselves on the same side. 1. The four knights were Henry's confidential friends,—*regi admodum familiares ut socii*: consequently they were well acquainted with his secret wishes and intentions. 2. It is, indeed, said that, suspecting their purpose, and repenting of his unguarded expression, he sent messengers after them to prevent mischief. But does not this consciousness of their object prove his complicity in it? That he could be in no great hurry to recall them is evident from the time which elapsed between their arrival in Kent, and the execution of their purpose. They passed two days in the vicinity of Canterbury, in deliberating with Ranulf de Broc, with the abbot of St. Augustines\*, and other persons whom they admitted to the conspiracy, and in collecting a sufficient military force. Now, to arrange the details of the tragedy with so many, and to collect a *considerable* number of men — *congregatâ satellitum ac provinci- alium turbâ* — would necessarily require two days. In fact, five days elapsed from their leaving Rouen to the consummation of the deed. Now, if Henry had been seriously inclined to save the primate's life, he had time enough to do so; but his convenient apprehensions for the result did not arise until they could be expressed without fear of benefiting the intended victim. 3. We are, indeed, told, that after the departure of the knights he held a council, in which it was resolved that orders should be sent over the channel for the arrest of the archbishop. To us this is merely another instance of the profound dissimulation in which Henry was so able a master. From the commencement of his hollow negotiations with the primate, to the consummation of the deed, it was evidently his object to procure that churchman's removal without compromising himself. If it could be effected without his formally hiring the

\* It is possible that the abbot was not aware of the extent to which the conspirators intended to go.



assassins for the purpose ; without a specific agreement as to the mode of the service and the recompence it was to receive, it would be preferable to open complicity. Such complicity, could it only be proved, must, as Henry well knew, have shaken his throne ; for though he appears to have had little respect for the papal thunders, he dreaded their effect on public opinion. Hence, as we conceive, the frequency of his complaints, that nobody prized his peace or honour, or he should now be rid of “ the turbulent priest ;” hence the hints that he appears to have dropped that his favour was only to be procured by the performance of such a service. We think that his wishes, both as to the catastrophe itself, and as to his exemption from implication with it, were perfectly understood ; and that it was the conviction of the knights that, by committing the deed and screening their sovereign, they should perform a service doubly valuable. 4. But though this is perhaps the more reasonable hypothesis, we are by no means sure that he did not actually and explicitly instigate them to the deed. Unless they were *certain* of his support, unless they had received actual authority from him, would they have openly asserted, not only that they were on the king’s business, but that they were absolutely acting in obedience to his commands ? It was in his name that they demanded troops ; in his they ordered the monks of the cathedral, during the interview with Becket in the palace, not to allow the churchman to escape ; his name, when they rushed into the church, they shouted aloud, to incite each other to the deed. 5. What was the punishment he inflicted on the murderers ? Reader, none whatever ! By the pope, indeed, they were compelled to visit Rome, and were sentenced to expiate their crime by a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It is some pleasure to find that, if human justice spared them, they did not long triumph in their guilt. Most of the sixteen (the four knights and their twelve associates) died prematurely and miserably in a foreign land. 6. The conduct of Henry after the catastrophe confirms his full

participation in the plot. Though he instantly *ceps* ambassadors to swear that he had not authorised *h*, deed, and engaged to concede every thing which the pope might demand—engagements which, after his points were gained, he well knew he would have no difficulty in eluding ; though they were abundantly supplied with gold, to corrupt the easy virtue of the cardinals ; though their oaths and his gifts caused him to be exempted by name from the curses which the pope denounced on all who had been concerned in the assassination, yet, when he learned that two cardinals were sent as legates to take cognisance of the crime, he precipitately withdrew into England, and from thence into Ireland. His pretext was, that his presence was necessary to receive the submission of the natives ; his real object, according to contemporary historians, was to elude with decency the visit of the legates. It was observed that, during the four months of his remaining in that country, no vessel from England reached the Irish coast : the state of the weather was a very good pretext ; but the real cause, beyond all doubt, was his fear that his complicity in the archbishop's death would be discovered, that he should be pronounced excommunicate, and his subjects absolved from their oaths of allegiance. At Wexford, receiving a message more favourable than he had anticipated, he hastened with the speed of the wind to the legates in France. Probably they were so far gained by his money,—for even in the twelfth century the Roman court was notoriously corrupt,—as to represent him guiltless of the murder ; but the concessions which he made would have a better effect on the pope. It is admitted by all the writers of the period that he engaged to restore the lands of the church of Canterbury ; to render satisfaction for the injuries done to the clergy ; to sanction appeals to the pope ; to maintain 200 knights during twelve months in the Holy Land ; and to serve himself three years against the infidels. But it is also certain that he agreed to several private articles, the tenor of which cannot be ascertained.

assan the copy of the oaths published both by Baro-  
as.s and Muratori\*, it is expressly asserted that one of  
them regarded the feudal dependence of England on the  
papal see. We should be glad to believe that he did  
not subscribe to such a base degradation ; but we think  
the article is genuine and authentic. This fact would  
explain what has puzzled many writers — the temporal  
pretensions of pope Innocent in the reign of John, and  
the actual homage of that detestable monarch. That  
Henry should keep the article private, is natural ; for,  
had it been published, his indignant barons would have  
hurled him from his throne ; that he was resolved not  
to observe it is no less probable, for the basis of his  
character was perfidy ; but if the act be, as we think,  
authentic, it must be admitted to afford the strongest  
possible presumption — we might say proof — of his  
privity to Becket's murder. The necessity that could  
wring his consent to such a clause must have been an  
overwhelming one. 7. His penance at the tomb of  
Becket, and his subsequent concessions to the Roman  
court, both which we shall mention in the ensuing  
paragraph, most strongly justify the view we have taken  
of the subject. In conclusion, we invite the reader to  
weigh the import of what we have here, in historic  
justice, attempted to urge, to combine the present with  
the preceding paragraphs, and afterwards to say whether  
we have rashly, or unjustly, or even uncharitably,  
charged Henry Plantagenet with the guilt of deliberate  
murder. We ask him whether, by the recognised  
canons of criticism, by the legitimate laws of evidence,  
by the clearest logical inference, we could possibly have  
come to any other conclusion ? Suppose these atroc-  
ities to have happened in private life ; that Henry was  
a mere country squire, and Becket a simple parish  
priest ; that under the circumstances detailed the latter  
was murdered, — would not the former be apprehended

\* See *Annales Ecclesiastici*, tom. xii. p. 637., and *Rerum Italicarum  
Scriptores*, tom. iii. p. 463.

and arraigned, not merely as *particeps*, but as *princeps criminis*? We ask farther, is there a judge on the bench, is there a magistrate at our sessions, is there a juror, grand or petit, in any of our tribunals, is there a single frequenter of our courts of justice, who, in such a case, with circumstantial evidence so strong before him, would hesitate to convict or to condemn? Though passion, or ignorance, or force, may for a season stifle the truth, the duty of investigating it is paramount in the historian, and equally so that of proclaiming it. His functions are strictly those of the judge: he summons the personages of former times to his bar; he subjects their evidence to the tests of reason, of experience, and of authority; and while it is incumbent on him to be as exempt from partiality as if he belonged to another species, he is equally bound to declare the sum of that evidence, whether agreeable or unpalatable to his readers. In our hands the dignity shall neither be prostituted nor degraded: the truth, or at least what we conceive to be the truth, shall fearlessly be proclaimed, whether the Vatican or Lambeth, whether St. James's or St. Giles's, frown at the disclosure.\*

The remainder of king Henry's reign must be de- 1170  
 spatched in a few sentences. Such a martyr in the  
 church's cause as Becket could not fail to be canonised; <sup>to</sup> 1216.  
 and no shrine in England was ever frequented by so  
 many devotees. One hundred thousand pilgrims, from  
 all parts of Christendom, are known to have visited it  
 in one year. The penance which Henry inflicted on  
 himself before that tomb, is too well known to be de-  
 scribed. Was this policy or superstition? Probably  
 it was a mixture of both. But to us there appears to  
 have been another motive,—a consciousness of guilt;  
 a hope that such unexampled rigour—unexampled as-  
 suredly in any crowned head—would atone, in some

\* The above paragraph is founded, as the reader will at once presume, on all the authorities we have followed for the circumstances of Becket's life. To repeat our references is useless. Dr. Lingard evidently suspected the truth, though he does not express it.

degree, for the crime. Had not this proud monarch felt the power of remorse, he would never have submitted to so humiliating a ceremony, — a ceremony perhaps enjoined by the legates as one of the secret conditions of his absolution. Six years after the murder of Becket, we have another proof how completely he had placed himself in the power of the Roman see. In a council held at Northampton, he conceded some of the most important points for which he had so fiercely contended, — that clergymen should not be arraigned before secular tribunals, on any charge, unless they had violated the forest laws, or had to answer for feudal infractions; that the king should hold no see or monastery vacant longer than a year, unless there were evident necessity in the case; that the murderers of clergymen should not only suffer the usual penalty, but forfeit their inheritance; that clergymen should never be compelled to make wager of battle. These remarkable concessions are strongly corroborative of the monarch's guilt, and that he was believed to be guilty by the Roman court. — Richard, his successor, had no material disputes with the church. Probably, the zeal with which he combated the Saracens, rendered the popes unwilling to quarrel with him. To the interference of one of them, Celestine III., he owed his liberty, when languishing in a German dungeon: nothing but the thunders of the Vatican could have unnerved the grasp of his gaolers. This is another of the many cases in which we recognise the utility of the popedom. — John was not destined to be on so good terms with it. His disputes with the holy see so blinded him with fury, that he resorted to acts as tyrannical as those of William Rufus: with even greater injustice he seized the church revenues; imprisoned at his arbitrary pleasure every ecclesiastic who fell under his resentment, and derided alike the decencies of life and the obligations of religion. But circumstances soon changed: *he* was not a Rufus, and Innocent III., who now reigned, was more powerful than the successors of Gregory VII. An interdict first, next an excommuni-

cation, lastly, a sentence of deposition, and the absolution of his subjects from their oaths of allegiance, were terrible visitations, yet they were visitations which were richly deserved. But the papal pretensions were in themselves so monstrous, that we lose sight of the royal miscreant's vices in the indignation they inspire. He put the seal to his own degradation, and the popedom to its own ambition, in consenting to hold England and Ireland as a vassal of the holy see, subject to an annual rental of 1000 marks. In the subsequent quarrels between John and his barons, the pope took the side of his vassal; ordered the barons to be excommunicated; and because Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury, had the courage to refuse, he suspended the patriotic churchman. In this reign there is much exceedingly disgusting. To see pontiffs, who ought in reality to be what they stiled themselves, *servi servorum Dei*, arrogating a temporal superiority over the kingdoms of the earth, was enough to engender infidelity.\*

The reign of the third Henry also exhibits some <sup>1216</sup> things worthy of notice; — all the progressive ambition, the worldly policy, the unchristian haughtiness <sup>1250</sup> of the popes. On this subject we have great pleasure in transcribing the sentiments of a distinguished Roman catholic historian and divine: —

“ The history of Henry's transactions with the court of Rome discloses to us a system of oppression under which the English clergy, by the united influence of the crown and the tiara, were compelled to submit to the most grievous exactions. The Christian hierarchy had, from the earliest ages, been distinguished by a regular gradation of office and authority, from the lowest clerk to the bishop of Rome, who was considered as the chief of the Christian body, and the vicegerent of Christ upon earth. As the northern nations extended their conquests, they diffused their peculiar notions of jurisprudence among the

\* Radulphus de Diceto, *Imagines Historiarum*, p. 591, &c. Bromton, *Chronicon*, p. 1079, &c. Gervase, *Chronica*, p. 1410, &c. Baronius et Reynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*; neonon Alfordus, *Annales Eccl. Angl. (sub annis)*.

provinces of Europe; these were invariably incorporated with the external economy of religion; and the constitution of the church became in a great measure assimilated in the ideas of the northern Christians to the institutions of a feudal kingdom. The pope held the place of the sovereign; the bishops were considered nearly in the light of his barons; and subordinate to the bishops stood the inferior clergy in the quality of sub-vassals. These feudal notions were followed by feudal ceremonies and claims. The bishop, before he entered on the administration of his diocese, swore fealty to the pope; and the priest, at his ordination, besides the ancient promise of canonical obedience, did homage to his bishop. Then, as the civil sovereign in his necessities required aid from his barons, and through them from their vassals, so the popes, in similar circumstances, demanded pecuniary assistance from the bishops, and through them from the rest of the clergy. At first their claims were brought forward with modesty and reserve; nor did the ecclesiastics refuse to relieve the wants or support the splendour of him whom they revered as their spiritual father, and beneath whose protection they reposed in the peaceful possession of their property. But gradually the necessities\*, and with the necessities, the demands of the pontiff's were multiplied, till they at length excited the remonstrances and opposition both of the clergy and of the laity. By accepting the donation of Pepin, and by subsequent acquisitions, the bishops of Rome now joined the concerns of temporal princes to the duties of Christian prelates; and the wars in which they were compelled to engage, sometimes with their own subjects, sometimes with foreign states, entailed on them expenses far beyond the annual amount of their incomes. This was generally the situation of the popes who governed the church during Henry's reign. Involved in a long and ruinous contest with the emperor Frederic and his partisans in Italy, overwhelmed with an immense load of debt, and forced occasionally to abandon their own dominions for an asylum on this side of the Alps, they looked to the aid of the clergy as the surest expedient for satisfying the claims of their creditors, recruiting their forces, and recovering their former ascendancy. Year after year the English, like any other national church, was called upon to contribute towards the support of the Roman see: and though the generosity or patience of the clergy was soon exhausted, their resistance was seldom successful against the authority of the pontiff, supported as it generally was by the authority of the monarch; for the fate of John had proved an awful warning to Henry, who, unwilling to provoke the enmity of the

\* We may also add, their luxuries and prodigalities.

pope, concurred in any scheme of exaction, unless he were occasionally deterred by the united clamour of the barons and clergy.

“The principal grievances which sprung out of this system may be reduced to two heads. 1. The popes, in imitation of the temporal princes, often required a *tallage* of the clergy, amounting generally to a twentieth, sometimes to a tenth, and on one or two occasions to a larger share of their annual income. These impositions had been originally introduced in the time of the crusades, and had been justified on the ground that the recovery of Palestine was an object equally interesting to every Christian; and that while the laity cheerfully shed their blood in the sacred cause, the clergy could not refuse to contribute a small portion of their revenues towards its success. But it was soon discovered that every war in which the pontiffs engaged, was, somehow or other, connected with the welfare of religion.\* When the contest commenced between Gregory IX. and the emperor Frederic, that pope demanded an aid of the clergy; as his affairs grew desperate his demands were repeated; and under his successor, Innocent IV., the frequency and amount of these tallages became an intolerable burden. Innocent, indeed, alleged in justification of his conduct, that he was an exile from his dominions, that at Lyons, where he kept his court for ten years, he had no resource but in the contributions of the clergy, and that whatever they gave was expended in the cause of the church and religion. These reasons, however, did not always convince those who suffered from the annual diminution of their incomes.† In many nations they were answered with complaints; in England they experienced the most decided opposition. The clergy replied, that they deemed it unjust to furnish money with the conviction that it would be employed against the emperor, who, though the pope had condemned him, was still to be considered a catholic prince, since he had offered to submit his quarrel to the decision of a general council; that each church had its own patrimony; nor could the pope with any more justice claim a share in the revenue of *their* churches than they could claim a share of the revenue of the church of Rome: that as the law, when it described every thing as belonging to the

\* One of Dr. Lingard's quiet blows — not the less effectual that they are quiet. Whoever imagines this distinguished writer to be any admirer of papal rapacity or tyranny, is ignorant of his works.

† We must except Grossetete, the celebrated bishop of Lincoln, who, in answer to the king's writ, enquiring by what authority he levied a tallage for the use of the pope, replied: — “Non est admiratione dignum, quod coepiscopi nostri et nos in hac parte facimus, sed admiratione multâ et indignatione quamplurimâ esset dignissimum, si etiam non rogati vel jussi aliquid hujusmodi, vel etiam majus non fecerimus.”—Ep. 119.



prince, spoke of his right of superintendance, not of property ; so the pre-eminence enjoyed by the pope imposed on him the duty of watching over all ; and that if the incomes of the clergy were more than sufficient for their support, they were obliged to employ the remainder in relieving the wants of the poor, not in furnishing the means of protracting a bloody and destructive war.\* For some time the king and the barons appeared indifferent spectators of the struggle. At length they were induced to interfere, by the consideration, that in proportion as the clergy were impoverished, the national burdens would press with additional weight on the laity. Ambassadors were despatched to the general council at Lyons, who in firm but respectful language remonstrated against the frequency of the papal exactions. Perhaps the promises which Innocent gave in his reply, were meant only to allay discontent. But if he was sincere, the necessities of his situation soon compelled him to break them ; and a new demand of a twentieth from the poorer, of a larger portion from the more opulent benefices, awakened an unusual spirit of opposition. The clergy drew up a list of their grievances, sent it to the pontiff, and appealed from him to the next general council : the barons, in bolder terms, warned him of the evils which might probably ensue ; and clearly insinuated their readiness to draw the sword, if it should be necessary, in support of the clergy. Even the king appeared to make common cause with his vassals, and forbade the tallage to be paid, under the penalty of his high displeasure. Yet this strong opposition gradually melted away. Henry withdrew his prohibition ; the barons relapsed into their former apathy ; and the clergy were reduced to compound with the pontiff for 11,000 marks.†

2. “ The second grievance consisted in what were termed papal *provisions*, by which the pope, superseding for the time the right of the patron, nominated of his own authority to the vacant benefices.‡ The consequence was, that many Italians possessed livings which should have been conferred on English clergymen ; and if some of them resided in the island, the others, after defraying the charges of a substitute to perform the duty, received and spent the remainder of their income in foreign countries. This abuse excited loud complaints on the part both of the patrons and of the clergy ; and the public discontent displayed itself in acts of illegal violence. An asso-

\* Such representations would do honour to the most enlightened times. The clergy were by no means so slavishly devoted to the Roman see as we generally suppose.

† Annales Burtonenses, p. 297. 305—310. Matthæus Parisiensis, Historia, p. 625, &c.

‡ Always, no doubt, for a consideration.

ciation was formed, under the title of the Commonality of England; and was clandestinely encouraged by the principal of the barons and the clergy. At its head was Sir Robert Thwinge, a knight of Yorkshire, who by a papal provision had been deprived of his nomination to a living in the gift of his family. His commands were implicitly obeyed by his associates, who, though they were never more than eighty individuals, contrived, by the secrecy and celerity of their motions, to impress the public with an idea that they amounted to a much greater number. They murdered the pope's couriers; wrote menacing letters to the foreign ecclesiastics and their stewards; sometimes seized their persons, threw them privately into dungeons, and compelled them to pay considerable ransoms; and at others carried off the produce of their farms, sold it by public auction, or distributed it among the poor of the neighbourhood. For eight months these excesses continued without any interruption from the legal authorities; the national discontent was gratified, with the sufferings of the foreigners; and the members of the association, to satisfy the officers of justice, pretended that they acted in virtue of a royal commission. Henry at length interposed his authority, and Thwinge proceeded to Rome to plead his cause before the pontiff. He was successful, and returned with a bull, by which Gregory authorised him to nominate to the living which he claimed; declared, that if ever the rights of the lay patrons had been invaded, it was without his knowledge, and contrary to his intentions; and promised that all future provisions should be confined to those benefices which were known to be in the gift of the prelates, abbots, and ecclesiastical bodies; a politic answer, which, while it wore the semblance of truth, separated the interests of the laity from those of the clergy, and was calculated to render the former unconcerned spectators of the oppression of the latter.\*

The clergy were at no loss to detect the object of this truly Italian policy. But it defeated itself; it threw them into a closer combination with the laity; the two parties made common cause; and in every future remonstrance addressed to the Roman court, the provisions were coupled with tallages, and both declared to be an abuse which could no longer be borne. The pope, however, long resisted, under the plea that provisions were necessary for the support of his dignity,

1250  
to  
1307.

\* "Matthæus Parisiensis, Historia, p. 513. 316, 317. 460, 461., Dunst. p. 206, 207. Rymcr, i. 322." Lingard's England, vol. ii. p. 304, &c.

since without them he should have no means of rewarding his most faithful servants. There can be no doubt, that like the temporal sovereigns, he never, or at least very seldom, conferred dignities without an equivalent. When Giraldus Cambrensis, the archbishop elect of St. David's, went to Rome, to procure his confirmation, and presented his works to Innocent, he used this memorable pun, — *Præsentiant vobis alii libras, sed nos libros*. But his works weighed little in the scale with the gold of his competitor, and he returned without success. The plea of the pope, that provisions were necessary, was scouted with contempt; it was represented, in a general address from the clergy, that fifty thousand marks were actually abstracted from the country by this practice. The pontiff allowed the practice to be an evil, and said that it had been always contrary to his wishes, however necessity might have caused him to adopt it. He proposed as a compromise, that eight thousand marks only should be set aside for foreign incumbents; that even this sum should be gradually reduced; and that on all future occasions, the lawful patrons should present as the benefices became vacant. Unfortunately, however, there was as little of sincerity on the part of the popes, as there was of a wish to abandon so convenient a branch of patronage: the very next year (1253) he provided\* to a living in the diocese of Lincoln. But the celebrated Grossetete, who filled that see, openly refused to receive the provision, and that too in a letter to the pontiff himself, on the ground that such an assumption of authority had never been granted by Christ to St. Peter, or any of St. Peter's successors. The remonstrance was not without effect: Innocent published a bull which virtually abolished the abuse, but that bull was frequently disregarded by his successors. And even he, though he abandoned one source of income, or patronage, now opened another. By offering the crown of Sicily to Edward, the second son

\* We use this word in the ecclesiastical sense.

of Henry, he contrived to draw immense sums from the country: in fact, England paid most of the expenses of the war which he undertook to expel Manfred.\* Yet Manfred triumphed, and the money was lost. It, however, fell on the king and the clergy, for the lay barons were too wise to supply the means of so wild an expedition as Henry contemplated. Alexander IV. was no less rapacious, and, we may add, no less unprincipled, than Innocent. But let us not, like most modern historians†, mention the extortions of the popes only, shutting our eyes almost entirely to those of kings. It is impossible to say which of the two was the worse.‡ Both ground the English clergy to the earth, not only by robbing them of whatever valuables they possessed, but by forcing them, when they had no money left, to accept bills in favour of Italian bankers. This was not all: one tenth of the revenues of the church was ordered to be annually paid into the exchequer: the goods of clergymen who died intestate, and one year's income of all vacant benefices, from the archbishoprics down to the parochial cures, were reserved to the crown. This oppressive league of pope and king raised the indignation of the clergy to the highest pitch, and was one of the causes of that popular discontent with both, so manifest in the writers of the fourteenth century. In the reign of the first Edward, the clergy were equally oppressed. The kings of England had lately found some advantage in assuming, or promising to assume the cross. As they could not be expected to fight gratuitously the battles of Christendom, the pope was applied to, and persuaded to authorise, for a given number of years, one-tenth of the church revenues to the crown to defray the expenses of the approaching expedition. When the money was received, it was expended on other objects. In fact, king and pope appear to have

\* Vol. I. p. 122, &c.

† Especially Mr. Turner, who, while he exaggerates, — if, indeed, it be possible to exaggerate — the rapacity of Rome, wholly passes over that of the kings. See his History, vol. i. (reign of Henry III.) and vol. ii. (reign of Edward I.).

vied with each other by what deceptions they could best plunder the people. When deception could no longer be practised, violence was substituted. The pope excommunicated, the king moved an armed force, the devil assisted both,—a trio of worthies, which, when combined, could not fail to triumph. It would be incredible, were it not satisfactorily attested, with what impudence Edward demanded from the clergy *half* of their incomes. They refused, and were about to express their indignation in some other way, when a knight entered the hall in which they were deliberating, and said, “ Reverend fathers, if there be any one among you who dares to contradict the royal will, let him stand forth, that his name may be known, and noticed as one who has broken the king’s peace !” All were terrified into submission. The next year brought a similar demand, with similar success. In this dilemma, the sufferers invoked the aid of the holy see, which published a bull, forbidding the clergy of any Christian country to grant laymen the revenues of their benefices without its permission. But if the pope was thus detached from the confederation, the king and the devil still remained. When the clergy resisted, the royal seal was placed on their barns ; the property of such as refused to compound, was sold ; and, by one sweeping decree, the novelty of which is quite admirable, the whole clerical body, lay and secular, were outlawed ! There is something so magnificent, as well as novel, in the idea of outlawing so powerful and numerous a body, after seizing the whole of their possessions, that we heartily forgive Edward.\* By degrees, most of them purchased his favour by submission : but a great number remained, who disdained to submit, and who contrived, by the assistance

\* Mr. Turner does not venture to offend Lambeth by detailing these facts. He alludes, indeed, to them, but in what terms ?

“ His (Edward’s) measures for preventing the further aggrandisement of the church, for subjecting its property to the general taxation of his people, and for preserving its revenues from foreign incumbents, were honourable to his sagacity and firmness, and led the way to our great reformation.”—Vol ii. p. 118.

of their friends, and the charity of the faithful, to withstand the storm. The archbishop of York and his clergy were the first to compound; but the primate of Canterbury retired, with a single chaplain, to a parsonage in the country, discharged the functions of a parish priest, and lived on alms, until his friends, without his consent, raised money enough to pacify the king, and procure the restoration of his temporalities. Probably Edward might have continued without peril, or even interruption, his splendid career of spoliation, had he confined his rapacity to the clergy; but, by the aids, tallages, and duties, which he imposed on the countries, cities, towns, and burghs, he created a mass of opposition, before which, in the end, he fell prostrate. In justice to him, we must observe, that he effected much good, however selfish the views which guided him. By the statute of mortmain he made void all future donations of land; by another, he forbade money to be sent to foreign ecclesiastics, residing out of the country.\*

That the tyranny, the rapacity, the violence of these two worthies—the pope and the king—should fill the country with dissatisfaction, and that this dissatisfaction should express itself in complaints, was inevitable. In fact, from the reign of Henry III., the chroniclers begin to speak more freely; to condemn,—cautiously indeed, but not the less effectually,—the oppressive innovations of the crown and the *tithe*. Nothing can be more spirited than some of the epistles of this period; nothing more manly than the tone of many ecclesiastics, not merely in their writings, but in their speeches when assembled in their house of convocation. But there was also another and more formidable evil to

\* Authorities:—Giraldus Cambrensis, *Rebus à se Gestis*. The historians of the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I. Rymer's *Fœdera*; *Statuta Henrici III. et Edwardi I.*; the *Concilia of Wilkins*; Turner; Lingard. See also Vol. III. p. 125—127. of the present compendium. By far the best, because most minute, honest, and impartial historian of these times, is Matthew Paris.

resist,—the irregularities of the clergy themselves. This is the necessary result of all prosperous and ancient establishments. To the restoration of religion by the cares of Lanfranc and his immediate successors, we have sufficiently alluded. In fact, the pious zeal of the period which elapsed from the reign of William I. to that of Edward I. was conspicuous in the amazing number of religious foundations, many of them endowed with a liberality truly princely. During the earlier part of this period, there was more general correctness of conduct, more of that meek and retiring spirit so characteristic of genuine Christianity. Then, indeed, as at all times, when wealth and power display their allurements to ambition, many churchmen were found to be pervaded by a spirit purely worldly; but the deterioration was by no means general; piety still exhibited itself in religious observances and in outward decorum of conduct. But in the latter part of it, from the reign of Stephen, and more especially from that of Richard I., the unsettled state of the times led to laxity of discipline, and this, in its turn, to religious lukewarmness, and even laxity of morals. Of the luxury of the period we have a good illustration in Giraldus Cambrensis. Dining one day with the prior and convent of Canterbury, he describes the numerous and delicate dishes, the variety and richness of the wines,—for ale and beer were not allowed to be introduced. That other monasteries were equally voluptuous, we incidentally learn from other sources. Luxury naturally led to licentiousness; and benefices were now prized, not on account of the duties they involved, but of the enjoyments they procured. Yet even at the worst period there were many who either fled from the world, ambitious of that ascetic holiness peculiar to the hermitage or the cloister, or, while they remained in the world, were careful to discharge their duties, at the risk of losing the royal or even the papal approbation. But, before we advert to particular names, we must glance at the

state of monachism in England, from the Conquest to the death of the first Edward.\*

That the multiplication of monasteries during this 1066 period, especially during its earlier part, was great, is evident from the labours of our ecclesiastical anti-1272-  
quaries. In this path Lanfranc, as we have before observed, led the way. Many of the great Saxon houses were still in existence; those which had fallen into decay, he repaired; he caused many others to be founded; and, in the latter respect, his example was imitated by his successors. 1. When he succeeded to the primacy of England, no other rule than that of St. Benedict, which Dunstan had been at such pains to introduce and extend, appears to have prevailed in England. The establishments of this order were numerous. Glastonbury, which, as we have related in the life of that saint, he made the head of all the rest, — the place whence the institution was diffused throughout the kingdom. Whether the cathedral of Canterbury was originally served by Benedictine monks, may, perhaps, be doubted; but at a subsequent period they were certainly there. The same probably may be said of the monastery of St. Augustine, in that city. We may here observe, that many of the English cathedrals were served, not by canons regular, but by regulars. Thus, of seventeen sees, existing in the twelfth century, seven were even then — formerly the proportion was greater — filled with monks. These were Canterbury, Rochester, Winchester, Norwich, Ely, York, and Durham. This custom, says Robertus de Monte, is seldom or never to be found in any other country.†

In other parts of the island monasteries of the same order arose with incredible rapidity. Omitting those which were subsisting under the Saxon kings, most of which, however, were enlarged, repaired, and enriched

\* Giraldu Cambrensis, De Rebus à se Gestis (apud Wharton, Anglia Sacra, tom. ii.).

† Hoc in aliis provinciis aut nusquam aut rare invenitur.



by the Norman and Plantagenet princes, there were some hundreds subject to the rule before the end of the thirteenth century. Diverging from this great order, and nearly identical with it, is that of Clugny\*, which had establishments in this island in the eleventh century. That of the Cistercians was introduced in 1128 †; its first foundation being the abbey of Waverley, by William Gifford, bishop of Winchester. The same century witnessed the rise of very numerous establishments of this order, which was evidently a favourite one with our ancestors. That of the Carthusians ‡ was introduced in the reign of king Henry II. Besides these there were numerous houses belonging to the knights of St. John, to those of the Temple, or the order of Premontre §; and a few belonging to that of the Trinity for the Redemption of captives. England had also to boast of an order founded by one of her own sons, — that of St. Gilbert of Sempringham, to whom we shall soon direct the reader's attention. Her monastic and military orders had long to maintain a warfare with the friars — the Dominicans and the Franciscans — who, in the thirteenth century, were introduced into this island: in process of time the former had forty-three, the latter had about eighty establishments among us. In short, the number of religious houses became too great for the interest of the commonwealth: above 130 were suppressed by the earl of Leicester during his short period of usurpation, — not, assuredly, for this reason, but because he wished to appropriate the revenues to himself. As these, however, were all dependent on some celebrated monasteries abroad, and the revenues, beyond what was absolutely necessary for the monks, were sent out of the country, he met with little opposition to his project. Yet, notwithstanding the number suppressed on this occasion, and twenty-eight more, with the papal permission, by Henry VIII., some years before their general

\* See Vol. II. p. 168.

† Ibid. p. 279.

‡ Ibid. p. 284.

§ Ibid. p. 295.

dissolution, a surprising number still remained to gratify the parasites of the court, when that tyrant resorted to his universal system of spoliation. If we were to judge of the state of religious feeling from the great disparity between them, we should have little reason to reverence Westmoreland, which had but one monastic establishment, and that was of the Premonstratentian order. Lancaster had but four, — two Benedictines, one canon regular, and one Cistercian: Cumberland had the same number, of which one was Benedictine, the rest canons regular and Cistercians. If the north-western parts of the kingdom showed so few signs of a devotional temperament, the case was different in regard to the north-eastern; Northumberland and Durham had a considerable number, and Yorkshire was absolutely covered with them. The midland and northern counties, however, were far more distinguished for their religious foundations, and they were far more richly endowed.\*

Of the churchmen who lived at this period, *St. Robert*, 1100, a Cistercian abbot, may lead the van. Having professed in the Benedictine monastery of Whitby, and not finding the observance sufficiently rigorous for his views, he repaired to that of Fountains, where he assumed the Cistercian habit. In 1137, he became abbot of a Cistercian monastery, near the Tyne. His life seems to have passed smoothly along; but if any faith is to be had in his anonymous biographer, he must have been a peculiar favourite of heaven. As he was one day praying that his name and that of his brethren might be written in the book of life, a voice cried from above, "Be comforted, son; thy prayer has been heard! Thy name and theirs are written in heaven; two only are excepted, whose names are written on earth; for their hearts have never been weaned from earthly things." The two, we are informed, soon returned to the world, and died miserably. Another day, as he had just crossed the ford at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he

\* Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. i. passim.

perceived amidst a company of young persons one who seemed to be occupied with something very important. Suspecting that all was not right, he ordered the officious meddler to follow him. With downcast looks the latter obeyed, following as closely, says the biographer, as if he had been tied to a horse's tail. When the saint had traversed some streets, and reached the outskirts of the town, he turned round to the other and said, "What art thou?" The devil — for such it was — replied, that both himself and his deeds were well known to the abbot; that he had been present at a wedding in the hope of raising a dispute between the bridegroom and the guests, fatal to the former; that they should afterwards, over their cups, quarrel with one another, and fight, and the region below gain a few more inmates. But his mischief was spoiled for that day, and, at the saint's bidding, away he vanished.\*

*St. Bartholomew* was no less noted in the legends of northern England. He was born in the neighbourhood of Whitby, in Yorkshire: in his early youth he had little taste for spiritual employments; in fact, his biographer, who was evidently contemporary with him, allows that his life was "not spiritual," but "carnal." He was favoured with a vision. He thought that he was in a lovely place, blooming with every beauty, and filled with dazzling splendour; and in that light was Christ, the Virgin, the apostle Peter, and John the Evangelist. She cast her eyes on him, and pointing him out to the two apostles, desired that they would bring him forward towards her Son. Instantly one took him by the right hand, another by the left, and reverently led him towards the place where our Lord was standing; but he was so overpowered by the splendour, that he was stupified. She said, "Approach; kneel before my Son, and humbly beseech him to have mercy upon thee!" Prostrate on the ground, he prayed for that mercy; and he was benignantly assured that he had found it. This vision, says his biographer, was

\* Bollandistæ, Acta Sanctorum, die Junii vii.

twice repeated ; but, adds the knave, lest any one should suppose it a fantastic illusion, he saw the whole a third time, waking, and with his bodily eyes. The miracle, however, had no good effect ; for Bartholomew's heart was so stony, that it resisted every impression. Miracles wrought without any visible object, and wrought too in vain, constitute no inconsiderable portion of hagiology ; —a circumstance about as creditable to the understanding, as to the honesty of the writers. But, stupid and lying as many of these biographers are, they sometimes throw great light on the manners of the times ; and they are faithful records of opinion. St. Bartholomew was fond of travelling ; and we next find him in Norway, though we are not informed what led him to so remote a region. Still less are we able to understand how he should there take holy orders ; for the country had not long received Christianity, and was still half immersed in paganism. That religion could not be very firmly established there, appears from the eagerness with which a grim old Norwegian wished him, a priest, to marry his daughter, and from the magical superstitions still flourishing among the people. As he was one day walking along, he was joined by a youthful companion, who at length told him that an evil spirit was near. " Friend," said Bartholomew, " I should like to see this demon !" The Norwegian told him to stand on his (the Norwegian's) feet, so as not to touch the ground ; and that he would not only see the spirit, but would ever afterwards have the power to see it. Whether he was afraid of making the experiment, or, as his biographer intimates, was unwilling to commit sin by this magical rite, he left at once the sorcerer's company, the demon, the fair maid, and Norway itself. Arriving in Northumberland, he attached himself as presbyter to one of the churches. His former vision now rushed on his memory, and he resolved to forsake the world. Having assumed the habit in the monastery of Durham, the first time he entered the church he proceeded, like the rest, to adore the huge

crucifix : as he bent before it, the crucifix, with equal courtesy, returned the salutation, — a fact, says the biographer, vouched by the prior Germanus, and many others. The motion of the crucifix is likely enough to be true ; for there was scarcely any knavery of which the monks of Durham were incapable. In another vision, St. Cuthbert appeared to him, led him to the island of Farne, showed him the oratory and hermitage \*, and told him that was the place reserved for him. The next morning, full of this heavenly manifestation, he communicated it to Lawrence the prior †, who praised, indeed, his zeal, but advised him to remain where he was. He persisted, and at length obtained permission to commence the eremitical life. ‡ On arriving at Farne, however, he found it occupied by another hermit, who received him somewhat gruffly ; and endeavoured, by the most contumelious treatment, to expel him from that desert rock. But it was his good fortune to expel his predecessor. Here he commenced a rigorous course of life, which grew more rigorous the longer it continued. For some years he indulged himself with fish, which he caught on the coast ; but that he subsequently abandoned as a luxury, and confined himself to bread, roots, and water : at length he relinquished even water. In recording this fact, his biographer cannot withhold his admiration :—“ Oh ! man truly admirable ! If we could find thine equal in other things, certainly in this we could not.” He now literally fulfilled the idea which ought to be entertained of hermits,—

“ Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.”

In such reverence was he held, that the mariners would at any time embark, if he assured them the passage would be prosperous. Such sanctity and such fame, the devil might well envy. Many were the freaks of the

\* See Vol. III. Life of St. Cuthbert.

† Lawrence was prior of Durham from 1149 to 1154.

‡ From the time of St. Cuthbert down to the thirteenth century, this island was never without hermits, — chiefly from the convent of Durham. In that century it became a Benedictine cell.

tempter, who appeared before him in every shape, — monkey or lion, bull or mouse ; sometimes leaping on him, sometimes seizing him by the throat, at other times, while before the altar, pulling him backwards on the floor. The saint procured a rod, and often struck at the demon, but the stroke fell on the yielding air.

There can be little doubt, that whatever sanctity might remain, sanity was fled. He had expelled one hermit ; another hermit came to expel him : this was the ex-prior Thomas, who soon quarrelled with him, and rendered his situation so uneasy, that he returned to the convent of Durham. In one year, however, Thomas expressed contrition for the offence, and Bartholomew revisited his hermitage. At length Thomas died, in all the odour of sanctity. Who could doubt of this, when Bartholomew saw the devil sitting in a corner, and lamenting that the dying man had no sin, for which he could trouble his last moments. To send the monster away, Bartholomew brought holy water ; but the sprinkling only made the fiend retire from one corner to another, until the saint, in a rage, threw the vase, with all the water it contained, into his face. Many were the other miracles which he wrought, but which we have neither the space nor the inclination to relate. One incident, however, we shall notice, because it has a fine touch of simplicity. The island of Farne is well known to be much frequented by the eider, or, as the neighbouring inhabitants call it, St. Cuthbert's duck ; the habits of this animal are very graphically and truly drawn by the biographer : —

“ From the most ancient times this island has been frequented by a certain species of bird, the name and brood of which have been miraculously preserved. At the time of nest-building there they congregate. Such is the tameness they derive from the sanctity of the place, or rather from those who by their residence in it have sanctified it, that they will allow themselves to be seen and touched by man. They love quiet, yet are not disturbed by a noise : they prepare their nests remote from the islanders. Some hatch their eggs close by the altar ; and nobody presumes to hurt them, or even

to touch their eggs without permission. With their mates they seek their sustenance in the deep. Their young, as soon as hatched, follow their mothers; and when once they have swum over their hereditary waves they never return to the nest: the mothers, too, forget all their recent tameness, and recover their wildness with their genial element. Such is the peculiar dignity of this renowned island, that if even ancient records were lost, it would be famed throughout the world. In a certain season, as a drake was leading her new-hatched offspring towards the sea, a young one fell into the fissure of a rock: the bird stood still, in such sorrow that no one could then doubt of her having human reason and feeling. Instantly leaving the other young, she returned to Bartholomew, and began to pull the bottom of his tunic with her beak, as if she would say, *Arise, follow me, and restore me my young.* And he quickly rose, thinking that she was seeking her nest under the place where he was sitting. But the bird still continuing to pull at his garment, he was at length convinced that she had some meaning which she wanted organs to express; that though she was unlearned in tongue, she was experienced in action. So she went before and he followed until they came to the rock; when she pointed to the place with her beak, and looking at him, told him as plainly as she could to look below. And moving to the brink he saw the young duck adhering with its wings to the side of the rock, and descending, he restored it to its mother. Whereupon, being much delighted, she looked exactly as if she were thanking him. Then with her young she entered the water, and Bartholomew, in great wonder, returned to his oratory."

This description is so graphic, that we willingly forgive the writer much of his absurdity. We can even bear the legend,—not an unpoetical one,—that one Christmas-day morning, after a walk, as he entered his oratory he found, to his surprise, the tapers lighted, and a venerable looking bishop, in full pontificals, standing before the altar; that seeing no other assistant, he advanced, filled with admiration and delight; that both, after repeating the accustomed confession, sang the office beginning *Lux fulgebit*, in a tone of great rejoicing; that, in the joy of his heart, he sang beyond his strength; and that, when the holy mysteries were celebrated, the tapers were extinguished without human hand, and the bishop, whom he knew to be St. Cuthbert,

vanished from his presence. The biographer confesses to have received this relation from brother William, to whom Bartholomew himself revealed it. Which of the three was the knave? Or did the hermit merely mention it as a dream, which the monk and the biographer not only represented as a reality, but embellished? \*

*St. Gilbert of Sempringham* was much more renowned <sup>1083</sup> than the preceding. Born in 1083, of a noble family, at Sempringham in Lincolnshire, he soon turned his eyes <sup>1139.</sup> towards the church. With the view of qualifying himself for some important post, he attended the celebrated schools of Paris, where, we are told, he distinguished himself. On his return, he was presented to two livings in the gift of his family — Sempringham and Torrington, — yet he was not in orders. According to the flagitious custom of the times, he received the revenues, while the duty devolved on a chaplain: those of one, however, he abandoned, and those of the other he chiefly gave to the poor. At Sempringham, where he abode, an accident was near proving fatal to his future sanctity. As there was no parsonage to the church, he and his chaplain lodged in the house of a parishioner, whose daughter, a girl of great beauty, made some impression on the hearts of both. Of Gilbert's waking thoughts, we may form some idea from a dream which he had: it seemed as if he had pushed his hand into the bosom of the girl, and that he could not withdraw it. On awaking, he began to reflect on the dangers of his situ-

\* Anon. Vita S. Roberti Abbatis Cisterciensis, cap. 1—2; necnon Vita S. Bartholomæi Eremitæ Farnensis, cap. 1—4. (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Junii vii.; necnon die Junii xxiv.). Johannes Capgravius, Nova Legenda Sanctorum, fol. cclxvi. et fol. xxxii. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesie Anglicanæ, tom. iv. (sub annis). Raine, St. Cuthbert, p. 22.

"It is extremely true," says the last-named writer, "that during the breeding season the tameness of the peaceful and harmless birds is quite remarkable; nay, it would appear that they have some recollection of Cuthbert and his protecting hand, for in the summer of the year 1818, I actually saw one of them hatching her eggs in a stone coffin, overhung with nettles, among the ruins of his mansion (hermitage). It grieves me to state, that since that time their numbers have been considerably diminished, their eggs have been broken, the soft lining of their nests prematurely taken away, their young destroyed, and they themselves wantonly shot, by the crowds of idlers who every summer visit Farnè and its sister island."



ation ; and, with a resolution worthy of all praise, he and his chaplain instantly left the house, and built for themselves a humble shed within the precincts of his church. Here both commenced a most rigorous life : constant in fasting, and in prayer ; profusely charitable towards the poor, consoling the sick, reproving the impenitent, and encouraging the well-disposed, he at least soon acquired celebrity, — an object which he had probably in view, for policy is often found to be strongly allied with enthusiasm. For a time this life was suspended by his residence at the palace of his diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln. Here, at that diocesan's instigation, he embraced holy orders ; probably because his conscience troubled him, that he should receive the revenues, without discharging the duties, of pastor ; — an abuse which had been severely condemned by the council of Rheims. He appears to have been little edified by his residence at Lincoln : he refused the dignities which were offered him, and returned to Sempringham, in the resolution, as we may infer, of withdrawing all he could from a world that he regarded as fatal to devotion. Here he commenced a life of great austerity, and of much labour, and he invited others to join him. In all ages, the female mind is more disposed to religion than that of man ; and Gilbert, finding that his embryo institute made little progress among the men, resolved to try whether he could not be more successful with the women. He soon found seven maidens, among whom was the fair daughter of his host, willing to renounce the world ; and these he enclosed with more rigour than had ever yet been observed. On no occasion were they permitted to leave the edifice he had constructed for them in the vicinity of the church of St. Andrew ; whatever they required, was brought to a little open window ; and their servants were poor girls of the neighbourhood, who attended daily to receive their commands, but who never entered the enclosure. Gilbert, however, soon found that there was danger in trusting these girls to so free an intercourse with the world : to keep them

within bounds, he caused them all to assume the regular habit, and take the vows. Hence there were two descriptions of religious; the nuns, whose seclusion was perpetual, and the lay sisters, on whom devolved the drudgery of life. The regularity of this little establishment, which he appears to have superintended with much anxiety, was soon known to the world. Men were now eager to join him. His first converts were merely agricultural labourers, to whom he gave the habit, and from whom he exacted the necessary vows; these he subjected to spiritual duties scarcely less severe than the bodily. Knowing, as he did by experience, the danger of intercourse between the sexes, he never allowed these male converts to approach the edifice where the nuns were secluded. To each, or, rather, to this double establishment, he appears for some time to have been the only clergyman; probably he never contemplated the extension of his system, which he might consider too rigorous for general imitation. We may, however, assume, that its utility was made evident; for he was soon importuned to found and superintend similar establishments—double monasteries—in other parts of the kingdom: and, for this purpose, lands and money were liberally placed at his disposal by Henry II. and some nobles. Being now at the head of several houses, he thought it high time to adopt some rule: that of the Cistercians—an order, like all orders, more glorious in its infancy than in its maturity—attracted his notice; and, in the hope of procuring his admission into it, he waited on pope Eugenius, on St. Bernard, and other abbots. They told him, however, that his institute was too different from theirs to allow of an union; that in no case could they extend it to females; and they encouraged him to form a distinct order, subject to such regulations as might be approved. On his return to England he perceived, that, unless his infant establishments were served with priests on whom he could rely, they could not long flourish; he, therefore, invited secular ecclesiastics to join him. These he

transformed into canons regular, subjecting them to the rule of St. Augustine; while to the nuns he granted that of St. Benedict, with such alterations in both, as were required by the peculiar circumstances of his institute. Without such alterations, he could not govern his fourfold flock; for the canons were accompanied by the lay brothers, the nuns by the lay sisters. Over each double house he placed a prior and prioress, all subject to the master, or general, or abbot of the order. Under each, and scattered throughout the rural districts, were granges, where so many of the lay brothers or friars were located as were sufficient to the cultivation of the glebe; over each was a superior, *grangearius*, whose duty it was both to superintend the agricultural labours, and to enforce the observance of the canonical hours. But these rural places were generally near to some priory; they were continually subject to the inquisitions of official visitors, or scrutators; the procurator, or even the prior himself, might, at any moment, call upon them to investigate the state of the house, to hear complaints, and remove abuses. To prevent excess in drinking, no beer was allowed to be brewed in any of these sub-convents; it was brought from the neighbouring priory, or, if the priory were too remote, — for some were necessarily placed in distant sequestered situations, — it might be procured from the nearest village or town. These granges, with their friars, or lay brothers, and their petty superiors, were attached to the conventual establishments of the nuns no less than to that of the canons. None of the friars, however near they might be located to the convents of nuns, were allowed to enter the precincts: the canons were equally excluded, except to administer the rites of religion; and then two aged priests were always chosen. Sometimes, when it was advisable for the prioress to confer with her own procurator, or the prior of the brethren, concerning the temporal wants or affairs of her convent, — and the administration of such affairs was always vested in the superiors of the con-

tigious monastery, — the conference was allowed ; yet on such occasions, both were accompanied by aged and discreet attendants. The church indeed, was common to both males and females ; but even there they were inaccessible, and, indeed, imperceptible to each other. And, lest failings of nature might, after all precautions, lead into sin \*, severe punishment was inflicted on the *female* culprit, — that of utter seclusion in a solitary cell, far removed from intercourse with the community, and doomed, during the rest of her life, to fast on bread and water : never again could she see human face, nor hear human voices, except at confession, or in dangerous sickness ; her loaf and pitcher were daily placed at a grate. The male accomplice of her guilt might either be punished in a similar way, or expelled, at the pleasure of the chapter convoked for the occasion. Between the lay sisters and the nuns, the lay brothers and the canons, great distinction was made : not only did the drudgery of life fall exclusively on the former, but they were not allowed any intercourse with the latter, except in the offices of religion, or other special occasions. — St. Gilbert had the satisfaction of founding thirteen of these great establishments, and of numbering 2200 souls among the four classes we have enumerated. To the last he observed unusual austerity ; yet he reached the extraordinary age of 106 years. His behaviour, in regard to Thomas à Becket, does him great honour. He had entertained that churchman during the flight from Northampton ; and he was accused to the royal judges of sending considerable sums of money to the exile. As the violent monarch had made this a capital offence ; as he prosecuted, with the most vindictive rigour, all who showed even commiseration for the primate, Gilbert, and all the superiors of his house, were summoned to answer the charge before the royal tribunals. It was not the wish of the judges to enforce the recent ordinance against

\* The sketch of St. Ailred will show that bolts and bars are not always effectual.

a man of his sanctity ; and, without calling witnesses as to the fact, they offered to receive his oath of compurgation, and dismiss him. But though he might have conscientiously taken the oath, he would not ; it would look, he observed, as if there were some degree of guilt in assisting a prelate who was suffering for religion. The judges, not venturing to condemn him, laid the affair, by writing, before the king, who was then in Normandy ; but Henry sent orders that the process should be suspended until he himself could take cognisance of it. They dismissed him with honour, and he heard no more of the accusation.\*

The preceding saints, not even excepting Thomas à Becket, do not appear to have been much distinguished for their literary acquirements. At this period, indeed, though *ecclesiastical* literature was immeasurably more widely diffused than in the Saxon times, English churchmen could not, in scholastic subtlety, bear comparison with those of France or Italy.\* No country, perhaps, can boast of more chroniclers ; and the MSS. on dogmatic theology and ascetic virtues, now mouldering in the dust of our public and collegiate libraries, prove that our theologians, such as they were, were much more numerous. The literary character of the age is drawn in a few words by Giraldus Cambrensis. " Among so many classes of men, where are the divine poets ? where the noble vindicators of morals ? where the critical masters of the Latin tongue ? Who, in the present times, displays literary eloquence, whether in poetry or in history ? who, I repeat, in this age, either builds a system of ethics, or consigns illustrious deeds to immortality ? Literary fame, once at the pinnacle of honour, seems now, owing to the depravity of the times, fast hastening to ruin, and rapidly descending to the

\* Anon. Vita S. Gilberti, p. 570. Alia Vita ejusdem, p. 572. (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Feb. iv.). Vita liberius ejusdem, p. 669. ; necnon Institutiones Beati Gilberti, p. 699—789. (apud Dodsworth et Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, tom. ii.). Capgravius, Nova Legenda Sanctorum, fol. clvi. Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici, tom. xi. (sub annis). Aelfordus, Annales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, tom. iv. (sub annis).

very depths of degradation ; so that students are not only neither entertained nor venerated, but are absolutely despised." Much of this, no doubt, is the ebullition of a disappointed, and therefore angry mind ; but it is not the less true that, since the death of Anselm, letters were declining. Restricting our labours, however, to the proper subject before us, — ecclesiastical persons and literature, — we revert to a few of the more celebrated in both.

St. *Ailred*, or, as he is often called, *Ethelredus* and *Aluredus*, the celebrated abbot of Rivaulx, was probably born before the opening of the twelfth century, but where, — whether in England or Scotland, — is uncertain. He was certainly at the court of David king of Scotland, a high degree of whose favour he is said to have obtained ; but, without being acquainted with the intermediate events, we next find him a monk professed in the Cistercian abbey of Rivaulx. His austerities — unhappily the virtue highest in estimation — were such that he was soon made prior of a community dependent on that of Rivaulx : he succeeded to that of the parent monastery, and, under his care, the community was at length increased to 180 monks, and fifty lay brethren. There is little, however, in his life worth noticing, if we except the passage relating to the character of the people of Galloway, whose chieftain he endeavoured to humanise. Whether he was there before or after his profession at Rivaulx, we are not informed ; but the passage is remarkable enough to be translated : —

“ Proceeding into Galloway, Ailred found the ruler of that country at deadly hatred with his sons, the sons with the father ; and the brothers with each other. For that region is fierce, wild, and savage ; beastly are its inhabitants, and barbarous in every thing which it produces. Truth is not to be found there ; wisdom has no resting-place ; neither faith nor charity abide there. Chastity is violated as often as lust impels ; nor is there any distinction between the modest woman and the whore : the women change their husbands every moon. Amongst the religious, indeed, some lead tolerable lives, but

this is by the advice and example of others, seldom by their own efforts. They are naturally stupid; and as their appetites are brutish, they always indulge in the enjoyments of the flesh. Wherefore Ailred found the chiefs of the province at deadly feud, which the king and the bishop had vainly endeavoured to quell, and the soil was stained with blood. Ailred, however, not only pacified them, but prevailed on the father to assume the habit; and him who had deprived so many of life, he thus taught to become a partaker of life eternal."\*

The works of St. Ailred are in number considerable. The lives of St. Edward the Confessor, of St. David, king, and of St. Margaret the queen of Scotland; thirty-three homilies on the Burden of Babylon, in Isaiah; three books on spiritual friendship; ten books on the nature, the quality, and the subtlety of the soul, and many epistles, are enumerated by his biographer: most of them have been published in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*; but many more might be enumerated, some of which have also been published, others remain in MS., not likely to be disturbed by any "Record Commission." His *Historia de Bello Standardi*, his *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*, and his *Miraculum de Sanctimoniali de Watton*, which have been published by Twysden, are the best known of his writings. The following extract is from his account of the Nun of Watton,—an account characteristic, not only of his manner, but of the period. The transaction is evidently a real one:—

"During the rule of bishop Henry—a prelate of holy memory in God's church—a female child about four years of age was received, at his prayer, into the monastery. And as she grew up from infancy, she assumed the frowardness with the years of a maiden: no love for religion, no care for the order, no fear of God.† Covered with the sacred veil, she yet exhibited in her conduct nothing worthy of her habit. Though she is reproved by words, she is not corrected; though punished with stripes, she is not mended." "The dis-

\* For the satisfaction of the Scotch, we particularise the passage.—*Bollandistæ, Acta Sanctorum, Januarii, tom. i. p. 750.*

† We omit some of the saint's less delicate expressions.

cipline of the order was at stake, and she was forced, however unwilling, to regard at least the decency of the outward man. She did all things from fear; from love, nothing. Arriving at a marriageable age, she preferred outward things to things inward, the idle to the quiet, the foolish to the serious. And it chanced that the brethren of the monastery, to whom was confided the care of its external affairs \*, had occasion to enter the nunnery. And she, being aware of the fact, advanced nearer, to examine both their countenances and what they were doing. Among them was a youth fairer and more blooming than the rest; the miserable one looked on him, and he looked on her. And they began to ogle each other, the serpent soon entering the breast of both, and bearing its deadly poison into their vitals. They first began with nods; nods are followed by sighs; and sighs by an actual discourse on that sweet subject, love. He meditated sin; she, as she afterwards asserted, thought only of love. Their affection thus harmonising, they agreed on a place where they might meet to converse and dally;—the time, not the open day, but dark night. The place was to be remote and secret; and a signal being given by the wicked corruptor, — knocking with a stone against the wall or roof,—the one about to be corrupted † promised certainly to join him.— Where is now, father, thy usual vigilance? Where now thine ingenious expedients to exclude all occasions of the vices? Where now that prudent, that cautious, that provident care, that faithful custody of each door, window, and corner, which seemed enough to deny access even to the evil spirits? Alas, father, one girl has eluded all thy vigilance. *For unless the Lord keep the city, vain will be the labour of the watchers thereof.* \* Thou didst, blessed one! assuredly thou didst all that man could do; but as no one whom God abandons can be converted, so no one can save whom He does not watch over. And thou, wretched female! what art thou doing? what art thou meditating? why so negligently listen to the rule? where is the fear, where the love, where the reverence of the holy congregation? where the sweet remembrance of the holy pontiff who introduced thee to this monastery? ‡ None of these considerations recall thee

\* Watton, in the county of York, was a double monastery of the order of St. Gilbert, and founded by the saint himself.

† “Dat signum prædæ impiissimus prædo.”

‡ Infatuated Ailred! The poor girl owed little gratitude to the memory of the man who had forced her into the cloister (she was evidently offered, viz. immolated, on the altar of superstition, in consequence, perhaps, of some rash vow), and still less did she owe to those who kept her there. This abominable abuse, however, was sanctioned by St. Benedict himself. See his famous Rule, Vol. I. p. 187. of this compendium.



from so wicked a project: all being destroyed within thee, nothing remains in thine heart beyond vile affections. Thou risest, wretched one, to meet thine enemy!" "Alas, she issues from her cell! Shut your ears! shut your eyes, ye virgins of Christ! The spouse of Christ goes out, soon to return an adulteress! She goes out, like the defenceless dove, and is received into the talons of the hawk! Prosternitur, os ne clametur obstruitur, et prius mente corrupta, carne corrumpitur. And, as this was often done, the sisters began to wonder what the signal meant, and to suspect something wrong; and their suspicion naturally fell on her, whose manners were most likely to raise it. The flight of the young monk increased the distrust; for no sooner did she tell him that she had conceived, than, apprehensive of the consequences, he left the monastery and returned to the world. Then the wiser matrons gathered round the girl, who is compelled to confess her crime. Great was the stupor of all on hearing this confession. Greater soon was their zealous wrath; they rush on her with clenched fists; they drag the veil from her head; some cry, 'Let her be buried alive!' some, 'Let her be flayed alive!' others, 'Let her be burnt at the stake!' But the older matrons assuaged this fury. However, she is immediately stript, extended on the floor, and whipt without mercy. A dungeon is prepared, and she is thrust into it; each of her feet is fettered, and in the same rings two other heavy chains are inserted; one fastened by a key to an immense block of wood; the other to the wall of the dungeon. She is fed with bread and water, and is daily assailed by the most cutting reproaches. In the mean time her shame appears. How great now the lamentation of all! how great the bewailing of the holy virgins, who fear lest the crime of one be imputed to all, who imagine themselves about to become a laughing-stock to all men, who felt as if they were already torn by the teeth of all! All wept together, each wept alone; and in their fury again and again they rush on the captive. Unless the more aged nuns had spared her, on account of the fruit of her womb, there is no punishment at which they would have hesitated. All these evils she patiently suffers, declaring that she deserved even greater torments, yet professing her belief that the rest would not suffer by her infidelity. They now deliberate what to do. If they expel her, her infamy will redound on all; if she and her offspring should die of want, great would be the peril of the souls of all; if she should be spared, and allowed to remain among them, the birth could not possibly be concealed. 'Better,' said one of the matrons, 'will it be to send the girl after her paramour; let her be confided to the care

of him to whose wickedness she has consented.' Hearing this, the unhappy one said: 'If this remedy please you, though I know it will be my death, behold, this very night, this very hour, the youth has promised to meet in the place conscious of our iniquity: and if it be your pleasure, you can deliver me to him. God's will be done!' Eagerly do they watch the words from her mouth; breathing revenge on the youth, they ask her to tell them truly if these things be so; and she confesses that they are. — Soon the master of the congregation opens the affair to a few of the brethren. And it is agreed for one of the monks to sit that very night, covered with a veil, in the place indicated; that some brethren shall be near at hand, to seize, to bind, and whip him. So said, so done. The youth, ignorant of what had befallen her, approaches in a secular habit, and a mind still more secular. *Et ardens libidine, mox ut velamen aspexit, sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellectus, irruit in virum, quem feminam esse putabat. At hi qui aderant, amarum ei cum baculis conficientes antidotum, conceptam febrem extinguunt. Res defertur ad virgines. Mox quædam zelum Dei habentes, etsi non secundum scientiam, ulcisci cupientes virginitatis injuriam, petunt a fratribus juvenem sibi modicum tempus dimitti, quasi secretum aliquid ab eo cognituræ. Susceptus ab eis, prosternitur et tenetur. Adducitur quasi ad spectaculum, illa malorum omnium causa: datur ei in manibus instrumentum, ac propriis manibus \* \* \* \* invitus compellitur. \* Behold the zeal shown by the cultivators of modesty, by the persecutors of uncleanness, by the lovers of Christ before all things! Behold, how by mutilating the one and by reproaching the other, they avenged the injury of Christ! Behold the sword of Levi, the holy zeal of Simeon, the avengers of violated chastity, who do not spare even the circumcised! Behold the zealous Phineas, who merited an everlasting priesthood by the destruction of the fornicators! \* Here we have the wisdom of Solomon, who sentenced his own brother to die, when that brother demanded the virgin Abishag to wife. Yet I praise not the deed, but the motive. I approve not the shedding of blood; I praise only the zeal of the holy virgins. What would not they suffer, what would not they do, to preserve their chastity, who thus avenged its violation?"*

A miracle follows. Penitent for her transgressions, the girl called long and earnestly on Christ; and one

\* We are compelled by the nature of it to omit the remainder of this unutterably horrible narrative.

night, while in her chains, she was safely delivered by the very bishop who had placed her in the monastery, and who had long been dead. The prelate, we are told, was accompanied by several women, who, when all was over, bore away the child. Awaking, what was her surprise to find her load removed? And what was the surprise of the nuns the following morning, to find neither pregnancy nor child! Believing that she had delivered herself, and destroyed her offspring, they diligently searched every corner of her dungeon; but nothing could be found; the straw remained as it was; not a fetter was moved; and in utter astonishment they asked what this meant. She could not tell; she did not understand it; she only remembered her dream, and her delivery by the holy prelate. But this is not all: during the succeeding nights she was visited by two heavenly messengers, who, after removing a chain, disappeared; thus returning every night to remove one, until only one of her feet remained in bonds. What could this mean? The nuns were amazed; amazed too were the brethren, the prior of whom, after minutely investigating the circumstances, reported them, says Ailred, "to my littleness." Ailred, as abbot of Rivaulx, a Cistercian foundation, could have no jurisdiction in the case; but no doubt the heads of Watton, to preserve the reputation of their community, had devised the miracle; had deceived even the pregnant nun herself; and, lest suspicious reports should after all be diffused, they tried even to work on the superstition of the abbot, and, through him, of the world. The whole proceeding may easily be explained without the aid of the conjuror, still less of the miracle-monger. Ailred visited the dungeon, where the captive nun still remained, with one foot only in fetters; and so well was the imposture managed, that he returned to Rivaulx satisfied of the divine manifestation. "After a few days," he continues, "letters from the venerable prior related to us how the last remaining fetter had miraculously dropped from the

captive, and asked my indignity what was now to be done. In my reply I used these few words, among others, *What God has cleansed, that call not thou unclean.* Whom He hath loosed, beware lest ye bind!" This relation is full of instruction; and it is as curious as it is instructive.\*

But the preceding is scarcely a favourable specimen of St. Ailred's manner. Of learning he has little; for judgment he is not much distinguished; and he is always labouring under a heavy load of superstition. Yet, with all these defects he has merit. His conceptions are always clear; they are sometimes forcible: his understanding is usually solid. But for the qualities of the heart more than those of the head, must this abbot claim our attention. He furnishes another to the many proofs of a fact which we are too apt to overlook—that in an age of gross superstition—we use the word without offence even to the Roman Catholic—there was yet much religious fervour, much even of a seraphic feeling, which we should in vain seek in modern writers. Sobered by experience, of chastised affections, and regulated thoughts, in constant communion with his God, after whom he evidently longed with the fervour of the royal psalmist; affectionate in manner, unrivalled in charity, the works of St. Ailred have sometimes an *unction*, which elsewhere it would be difficult to find. From his own relation we learn, that his heart always yearned for an earthly no less than a heavenly friend; that the privilege no less than the enjoyment of man consists in love; but then it must be well placed. What can be more affectionate than this introduction to a sermon, which he delivered after a short absence from his monastery?

\* Anon. Vita S. Ailredi (apud Bollandistas, Acta Sanctorum, die Januarii xii.). Capgravius, Nova Legenda Sanctorum, fol. xi. Twysden, Decem Scriptorum, p. 416.: necnon Prefatio ad eosdem, p. xxvii. Alfordus, Annales Ecclesie Anglicanae, tom. iv. p. 151. Quaedam Opera divi Ailredi (in Bibliotheca Patrum, tom. xiii. pp. 1—154.). Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, tom. xxii. p. 135, &c.

“ Here am I, my beloved children, ye who are my joy and my crown ! After many labours, and a journey not without danger, restored to you, restored to your affections ! To me this is that day of exultation which, when in a foreign country, when separated from you by a stormy sea, I desired to see ; and God heard that desire. Oh, love ! how sweetly thou inflamest the absent ! how delightfully thou feedest the present ! ”  
 “ To your profit, dearest brethren, I devote myself, my whole life, every power that I have reason to know may be serviceable to you. Use me as ye please ; spare not my labour, whenever it can avail you.”

Again, in his *Speculum Charitatis*, or *Mirror of Love*, he frequently appears to us in seraphic beauty :—

“ O Lord God ! how great the delight of loving thee ! how great the tranquillity of that delight ! how great the security of that tranquillity ! The love which has thee for its object cannot err,—for than thee what is better ? The hope which rests on thee cannot be deceived—for in thee is fulness of satisfaction. Here excess of love is not to be feared, for no measure is prescribed ; and death, which dissolves human friendships, cannot here be dreaded. In the love of thee we need not fear to offend, unless we suffer that love to be lost. In it no distrust intervenes, because thou estimatest it by the evidence of the conscience. Here is a delight which excludes all fear ; here is a tranquillity which absorbs all anger ; here is a security which bids defiance to the world. Compare, I beseech you, with all the riches, the delights, the honours of the world, this one privilege of Christ's servants,—they fear not death.” “ When man withdraws himself from external tumults, and enters into the recesses of his own mind ; when he perceives nothing unquiet, nothing out of order, nothing of ill-will, nothing of remorse ; when he finds that all things are cheerful, all harmonious, all peaceful and tranquil ; when, like the father of a well-regulated, pacific family, he sees smiles on all his thoughts, words, and works ;—then arises within himself an unspeakable security ; from that security springs delight, and that delight rising into rapture, he praises God the more fervently in proportion as he sees traces of the divine image within him.”

Nor is St. Ailred less inattentive to the love which, according to the divine command, should bind man with man. With a glowing pen he dwells on these sa-

cred words, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* In that line he comprises, as his divine Master had done, not only our friends and neighbours, not only our own countrymen and strangers, but even our enemies.\*

Of a far higher class than any of the preceding, was 1228. *Stephen de Langton*, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1228. No man has more lasting claims to our gratitude. The part which he took with the barons to wrest the charter from king John; his solicitude to establish, on a good foundation, the liberties of the subject; his refusal to excommunicate the barons who had revolted against the tyrant, even though commanded to do so by the pope; his consequent suspension and deprivations, must endear him to all who love freedom. On the accession of the third Henry, the pope, no less than John, having ceased to trouble both him and the world, he was restored to his dignity. To the close of his life he never lost sight of the Great Charter, which he himself had chiefly drawn up, and which he continued to love with the affection of a parent. When Henry endeavoured to elude it, at the call of his associates the barons, he readily placed himself at their head, and forced the king to confirm it, subject, however, to some salutary modifications. Hence, as is truly observed by a most distinguished writer †, “no man is entitled to a higher place in English history, for having contributed to the liberties of England, than Stephen Langton. It is no disparagement to him that he was devoted to the see of Rome more than was consistent with the interests of his country; for, while, under a sense of popish and religious duty, he was ready to suffer any thing in submission to its authority, he resolutely refused to act in obedience to its orders, when he believed them to be unjust, affording thus the surest proof of integrity, and

\* *Divi Ailredi Sermo*, xv. p. 34.; necnon *Speculum Charitatis*, cap. i. p. 71. cap. ii. p. 74. (in *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tom. xiii.).

† Southey, *Book of the Church*, vol. i. p. 281.

bequeathing to his successors the most beneficial of all examples." Nor was he less vigilant over the conduct of the clergy, whom he laboured incessantly to improve alike in morals and in learning. Hence the code of canons which he drew up for that purpose, and the firmness with which he enforced their observance. Of his other writings we can give no account; most of them appear to have perished; some doubtless remain shrouded in the dust of collegiate and cathedral libraries — dust which no hand is ready to wipe away. They chiefly consisted of comments on the Scriptures. —

1246. Of a character still more estimable was *St. Edmund*, one of his successors in the same see. Having finished his education at Paris, he taught there for some time with considerable success; and his preaching is said to have been so powerful, that many renounced the world and entered the cloister. On his return to England he lectured at Oxford; and accepted a curacy in the church of Salisbury. Dignities, however, he never sought; on the contrary, he refused all which were offered to him. In reality, the man who was content with one meal a day, and that of the coarsest kind; whose clothing was as frugal as his fare; whose austerities were of the most rigid description, could not easily be tempted by ambition. His fame for piety and learning was such, that in 1234 he was elected to the primacy of the English church. In vain did he endeavour to decline the dignity; and notwithstanding the commands of his diocesan, the bishop of Salisbury, he would certainly have persisted in his refusal, had not his conscience been alarmed by the intimation that his resistance was rebellion to the will of God. His reluctance may be easily explained. The English church was now sunk into a low state of corruption. As we have before observed, on the one hand the king, on the other the pope, united to plunder and oppress it; neither paid much regard to discipline; and the morals of the clergy themselves had lamentably suffered. On

every side was indifference to religion, luxury, neglect of duty, incontinence, ignorance, often the vices of dissipation : and it required far more vigour of character than Edmund possessed to stem the torrent, — a torrent, in fact, which would have proved resistless to a sterner mind. Yet he felt that, if he accepted it, he must, in conscience, attempt the removal of abuses. Hence, after his reluctant elevation, he commenced his career of duty. He had soon reason to be satisfied that his former apprehensions were just. In his attempts at reformation he experienced every possible opposition from every possible quarter, — from the pope down to the parish clergy, from the king down to the lowest feudal patron. Thus, in 1240, he reluctantly consented to the enormous exaction of a fifth by the pope, then at war with the emperor of Germany ; but he did so in the hope that he should procure for the English church the freedom of election. But if *he* consented, many of his bishops did not. In general, the pope promised any thing until the money was procured ; and then availed himself of those evasions or delays, which he never failed to interpose. In consideration of this and another present,—for, so notoriously venal was the papal court, that no application was received by it without a bribe, — Gregory IX. engaged to support his demand,—that unless elections to benefices took place in six months from the death of the last incumbent, the metropolitan should have power to present. Henry III., with all his affected piety, was just like the rest : he declared that this pretension encroached on the rights of his crown ; meaning, that it diminished that large portion of his revenues arising from vacancies ; and a present from him caused the pope to change his opinion. The clergy were themselves anxious for such a reform ; but the pope and the king were evidently leagued to plunder both the people and the church — as it would appear, alternately. To procure that harmony which is necessary even among thieves, one must sometimes give



way to the claims of the other. Now the clergy applied to the pope against the monstrous rapacity of the king ; next they applied to the king against that of the pope. The very same year, before the majority of the prelates had agreed on the demand of one fifth, with an impudence of which there is hardly a parallel in history, Gregory addressed a mandate to the primate and the bishops of Lincoln and Salisbury, calling on them to reserve the next three hundred vacant benefices for Italians alone. Both demands spread, as they well might, the utmost indignation throughout the English church. The king had been served last ; it was now his turn to favour his colleague. The deputation of the monastic order, who truly represented that, what with the papal and what with the royal exactions, they were ground to the earth, and who begged his protection against the demand of a fifth, he received with menaces. " Hear these wretches !" said he, turning to the papal legate, who had doubtless proved to him that the next fleece was the pope's : " they publish the secrets of his holiness, and presume to escape submission. Do with them what you please ; I can lend you one of my strongest fortresses to serve as a prison for the impudent rebels !" The poor abbots retired, convinced that they must submit. The bishops, however, were less tractable ; they condemned the wars of the pope with the emperor, and declared their unwillingness to furnish money for the shedding of christian blood. They proved that the demand was monstrous ; that, as it was made under the menace of ecclesiastical curses, it was a violation of the liberties of the church. Disappointed here, the legate had next recourse to the clergy of Berkshire, where he then was : their reply was more firm, and was more pervaded by the spirit of independence, than even that of the bishops. Unfortunately, however, both bishops and clergy suffered themselves to be seduced in private : through the offer of new dignities, artfully made to each in particular, many consented to the contribution. Discouraged with these, and other difficulties

which he vainly endeavoured to overcome, St. Edmund, after upbraiding both king and legate, went into voluntary exile. Dismissing his train of domestics, he buried himself, like his illustrious predecessor, Thomas à Becket, in the abbey of Pontigni. There falling dangerously ill, he was removed, by the advice of his physicians, to that of Soissy, in the vicinity of Provins. Instead of diminishing, however, his illness increased with such violence that he felt his last hour was at hand. Few men could repeat, with equal truth, the prayer of this excellent prelate before he expired: "Lord, in thee I have trusted; thee have I preached; in thee have I faithfully instructed my flock: and well thou knowest that I have desired nothing on earth but thee!" He died on the 16th day of November, 1246. During his last residence at Pontigni, where he was held in the most affectionate veneration, he drew up, for the edification of the monks, his *Speculum Ecclesiæ*, a work which contains purer strains of devotion than any other of the same century. What the saint, — for such he truly was — enforces with most earnestness, is the love and obedience of God; and his strains sometimes assume a tone worthy of seraphs themselves. From such a work, the historian cannot well make extracts. We will merely add, that this excellent prelate affords a proof, that in a superstitious age, real, even enlightened piety existed, and that, in a corrupt one, moral worth was to be found in the highest perfection human nature can attain.\*

Contemporary with St. Edmund, of equal uprightness 1253. of principle, but far his superior in vigour of character, was the celebrated *Robert Grossetete*, bishop of Lincoln. Born of humble parents in that county, he was indebted for his education at Oxford, to the charity of the mayor of Lincoln. The proficiency which he made justified the discernment of his patron. Having studied the usual

\* *Mattheus Parisiensis, Historia*, and most of the contemporary historians of England (sub annis). *Capgravius, Nova Legenda Sanctorum*, fol. ciii. *Surius, de Probis Sanctorum Vitis*, die Novemb. xvi. *Raynaldus, Annales Ecclesiastici* (sub annis). *S. Edmundus, Speculum Ecclesiæ* (in *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tom. xvi.).

heads of learning in that university, he repaired, in conformity with the custom of the times, to Paris, which was at that time the most celebrated school in Europe. There he acquired great reputation, obtained his doctor's degree, and returned to receive such preferment as his merits deserved: he was soon made archdeacon of Leicester, and in 1237 he succeeded to the see of Lincoln. This fact proves, that with all its corruption the English church still possessed something good: even in times that some are apt to call more religious, as well as more enlightened, such homage would not readily be paid to merit alone. From his elevation, he was resolved never to spare abuses; to assail them even where there was no prospect of removing them. Stern in his notions of duty, conscientious in all his actions, of incorruptible integrity, of spotless life, ardent in his zeal, intrepid in mind, and deeply impressed with the manifold evils to which we have already adverted, he became what he endeavoured to be, a faithful pastor of Christ's flock. The corruption of the church he chiefly ascribed to the conduct or incapacity of the clerical body; he inveighed with honest bitterness against the worldly spirit which animated all; he spared not even the tiara; and within his own jurisdiction he proved to be a formidable unbending opponent of every "wolf in Christ's fold." Invariably he refused institution to every pluralist; to clergymen engaged in secular pursuits, such as the courts of law; to all, however qualified, who did not promise to reside on their benefices. Such inflexible rigour was sure to create much opposition: the clergymen thus rejected, complained to their patrons; the patrons stormed; the ministers of the crown murmured; but he heard all unmoved. Not less were the obstacles he encountered in his attempts to reform both the clergy and laity of his diocese. The latter sought the protection of the civil courts; the former pleaded their ancient customs or papal exemption: from his decisions, appeals were frequently carried to the king by the one party, to the pope by the other; he was always involved in some law-

suit; and twice he was compelled to visit the papal court, to answer for his suspension of negligent or inefficient clergymen. In his visitation of the monasteries, which he would not allow any exemption from his jurisdiction, to depose such superiors as were convicted of immorality, ignorance, or remissness: to excommunicate clergy or laity who spurned correction, seemed to be the favourite, as beyond doubt they were the chief, occupations of his life. He resisted, with greater firmness than success, the continued claims of the royal prerogative; but if, through the interested opposition he encountered, he had thus the mortification of failure, he might yet be consoled, not only by the consciousness that he had done his duty, but that his energetic remonstrances were making a great impression on the public mind.— With the pope he was not less inflexible than with the crown. Neither pontiff nor legate could prevail on him to institute foreign clergymen to any living in his diocese. Thus, when Innocent IV. sent a provision to a prebendal stall in Lincoln cathedral, in favour of his own nephew, the bishop replied, that such provisions were contrary to the good of the church and the welfare of souls; that he would not consider the present one as issued by the pontiff; and that, even if it were, he would not regard it. Again, on receiving another mandate from the papal chair, as little agreeable to his principles as the former, he not only rejected it, but wrote to the other bishops to do the same, in a tone of such indignant severity, of such manly independence, of such inflexible conscientiousness, of such enlightened policy, as to convince us, that, even at this period, when papal corruption was at its height, — and assuredly the climax may be referred to the third Henry's reign, — the English church had still something to command our respect: — “ I know that if I obey with respect such commands as are truly apostolic, I oppose such as are not, even from a regard to the honour of the holy see itself: both that submission and this resistance are obligatory on me, since they are the positive injunctions of God himself. Now, to be

apostolic, these commands must be conformable with the doctrine of the apostles, and of Jesus Christ, whom the pope represents in the church ; but the letter which I have received from him, in no wise exhibits this conformity. In the first place, it bears the odious clause, *non obstante*, which gives birth to inconstancy, impudence, lying, deceit, distrust, and saps the foundations of human society.\* By allowing the pope to annul all particular laws and conventions contrary to his own will, it involves the monstrous doctrine that there can be no certain rule of church government. Since the sin of Lucifer, which will also be that of Antichrist, there has been none greater than that of ruining souls by depriving them of faithful pastoral service, by thinking of the flock only as an object of never-ending plunder. Now, as the cause is worse than the effect, so they who introduce into the church these false shepherds, these murderers of souls, are worse than these pastors: they are not much better than Lucifer and Antichrist; especially when we consider that the higher the authority they hold in the church, the greater their obligation to banish such pastors from it. The power which the holy see has received from Jesus Christ, it has received for edification only ; nor can it lawfully order or do any thing tending to it sin so abominable in itself, and so injurious to the world : to suppose such a thing would involve a monstrous abuse of power, a departure from the throne of Christ, an exchange of that throne for the throne of pestilence in hell. Whoever is faithful to the holy see, and not separated from it by schism, cannot obey such commands, come from whatever quarter they may, — should they come even from the highest angels : on the contrary, he is bound to oppose them with all his might

\* *Non obstante*, notwithstanding any previous decrees or provisions to the contrary. This clause was, indeed, odious and wicked. By it the pope could annul or suspend the decrees of preceding popes, and even set aside the acts of councils. It recognised the worst species of despotism, — the power of one man to effect what he pleased, in contradiction to scripture, to reason, and to authority. This clause appears to have been first introduced by Innocent IV. (1243—1254). The evil was, therefore, of no long growth.

Wherefore, venerable brethren, allow me to protest, that I will not obey such orders — that I will resist them to the last." Such language as this does immortal honour to the memory of Grossetete; nor was it peculiar to him. Similar sentiments might be extracted from a hundred other divines of the middle ages, but not expressed with equal boldness. It was far from pleasing to Innocent IV., who was proceeding to punish him for his audacity, when some of the papal councillors suggested the propriety of forbearance, as Grossetete was too popular, and his opinions too generally diffused in England, to render such punishment advisable. There can be no doubt that it would have led to open tumult, or something more. So exasperated was the public mind with the abuses of the popes, and the immorality of the clergy, that it was prepared for violent measures. There was, indeed, equal reason for dissatisfaction with their king, who was a nearer and more dangerous plunderer. In reading the history of this period, it is impossible not to feel some surprise, and more indignation, that the people did not rise *en masse*, and put down king and pope. Grossetete, however, had no such wish. He was evidently attached to the holy see, the powers of which he exalted far more highly than was to be expected, even in these days: he was apparently not averse to its superiority over the temporal power: he was, certainly, a determined supporter of clerical immunities, even of those we justly regard as most obnoxious. His object was to reform the popedom, not to curtail its prerogatives, much less to destroy it. The vehemence of his language arose from his character. Fearless of danger, in the presence of Innocent himself, at a synod of Lyons, he preached in his usual strain, — referring all the evils of the times to the corruption of the clergy, and openly charging the papal court itself with the origin of this corruption. "What," he asks, "is the first and original cause, the primary fountain of such wickedness? I tremble to speak it, yet speak it I must, lest I fall under the prophetic denunciation, — *Woe is me! for I am undone, because I*

*am a man of unclean lips.\** The primary fountain is the papal court, not only because it does not dissipate these evils, and purge these abominations, when it alone has the power, and is under the most imperative obligations to do so; but, in a higher degree, because by its dispensations, provisions, and collations, it sends pastors into the world, who verily destroy the souls of men." Other passages there are, which, without being open charges, involve still severer accusations. Of the corruption of the papal court at this period, in this very city of Lyons, we have evidence no less striking than that of Grossetete. Matthew Paris has preserved the fragment of another discourse, delivered to the clergy by Cardinal Ugo, just as the papal court was preparing to revisit Rome. "Brethren," said the cardinal, "great has been our usefulness, great our charity, since we came to this city. When we arrived, we found three or four public stews: at our departure we leave one only—but to speak the truth, it is a somewhat large one, since it embraces the whole city from east to west!" We should not, therefore, be much surprised at the open charges, and still more cutting irony of the bishop of Lincoln. In conclusion, we may also state, *his* conduct was as pure as his language; that he zealously practised the virtues which he inculcated to others. \*He regarded the Dominican and Franciscan friars, both of whom, during his episcopacy, were introduced into England, with peculiar favour: he selected his best preachers from them, and was always accompanied by them in his visitations. The veneration in which his memory is held, the respect with which he is invariably mentioned, the evident approbation with which his remonstrance to the pope is related, are facts highly honourable to the Roman catholic writers, from that day to the present. Great efforts were made for his canonisation; but the reigning pope, who preferred a tool to a saint, a man of no principle to one with any, coldly received the application.—Although the works of Grossetete consist chiefly of sermons, epistles,

\* Isaiah, chap. vi. ver. 5.

and treatises on the moral virtues and points of ecclesiastical duties and discipline, he wrote on some subjects of philosophy and science. By a competent judge, friar Bacon, he is pronounced perfect in divine and human knowledge. His works are too numerous, and too long for notice in almost any work not expressly devoted to the subject.\*

The state of religion and of the church in England, from 1307 the death of the first Edward to the preaching of Wycliffe, to 1380. exhibits in an extraordinary degree the progress of the national discontent. The three great causes, the rapacity of the popes, the extortions of the crown, the increasing worldly spirit of the clergy, made a deep impression on the public mind, and roused into action the slumbering elements of resistance. The writings of Grossetete, more still the vices of the papal court, had destroyed much of the reverence in which it had hitherto been held. The dissensions of the monastic and secular orders grew more embittered. Both monks and clergy turned their arms against the friars, who contrived within a short space of time to obtain boundless wealth: For this it is easy to account. In their infancy, before they were corrupted by worldly prosperity, and while zeal glowed with new fervour, their conduct put to shame that of the parochial priests. By these priests, with the permission of the bishops, they were at first willingly received as coadjutors; but by their activity, by their superior knowledge, — for superior it was, — by their austerities, by their renunciation not only of the comforts but the necessaries of life, they soon absorbed the popular favour, while the ancient clergy fell into disrepute. Hence the efforts of the latter to rid themselves of their rivals. Fortunately for the friars, they were

\* *Matthæus Parisiensis, Historia*, pp. 506—756. *passim*. *Richardus Bardeniensis, de Vita Roberti Greathead*, cap. 1—36. (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, ii. 526, &c.). *Annales de Lanercost*, p. 341, &c. *Annales Burtonenses*, p. 325, &c. *Epistolæ Grossetetæ*, *passim*. *Epistola Decani et Capituli S. Pauli ad Clementem V. de Canonizando Roberti Greathead*, p. 343. *Giraldus Cambrensis, de Laudibus Roberti Greathead*, p. 344. (omnes apud eundem eodemque tomo). *Brown, Appendix ad Fasciculum Rerum*, tom. ii. p. 250, &c.



protected by the papal court ; many of them were presented to the chief ecclesiastical dignities ; the patronage they thus acquired they were careful to exercise in behalf of their own order, and, partly through papal and episcopal, partly through royal and popular support, they were soon able to lay splendid foundations in most counties of England. It is a true, but by no means extraordinary fact, that in half a century after their arrival they delivered more sermons and heard more confessions than the secular clergy. In the Roman catholic church, whoever sits in the tribunal of penance may speedily acquire influence. So it was with the Dominicans and Franciscans, who soon acquired the affections, no less than the substance of the people. Hence the bitter enmity with which they were regarded by the clergy, both secular and monastic ; hence the complaints which we so frequently meet in our old chroniclers, of the meddling spirit, of the grasping rapacity, of the concealed vices, and consummate hypocrisy of the friars : by some, indeed, they are openly charged with infidelity. Though these charges must be received with great suspicion ; though they are evident and wilful exaggerations, we may yet believe that wealth had the same effect on the friars as on other men ; that it corrupted their hearts, impaired their zeal, their morals, and their usefulness ; that riches made them luxurious, and power insolent. Of this fact, we have other evidence than from monks and secular priests, — that of our ancient poets. In those of the fourteenth century, above all, we meet with the keenest satires on these orders, and on the whole body of the priesthood. The pages of Gower and of Chaucer alone would suffice to prove that a very great degree of vice existed among them. To these pages we refer the reader, with the assurance that from them he will derive a better idea of the times than from a hundred volumes of mere history. — To this mass of dissension, and, by consequence, of popular discontent, we may add that between the villeins and their lords. In the first place, the oppressions of the feudal system had become

intolerable. In the second, the example of the cities of Flanders, Germany, and Italy, Switzerland, and even of France, many of which had wrested important charters from their feudal tyrants, was not lost on this side the channel. In the third, principles of a republican tendency had made great progress among the humbler classes of society. Most of them were probably derived from the Flemish merchants; and they were aggravated by the rapacious overbearing conduct of the feudal gentry, and by the efforts of certain individuals who from time to time arose to direct the popular mind. The writings of the poets themselves would eventually have a great effect. The freedom with which they lashed prevailing vices, could not fail to command applause; their wit would excite the ridicule, their serious pieces the indignation, of the hearer or reader; and when we consider that they were exceedingly popular; that their favourite sayings were repeated by thousands and tens of thousands who were incapable of reading them, we shall cease to be surprised at the effect produced. On this consideration, we know not that sufficient stress has been laid. Alone, it would almost account for the moral revolution which signalled the latter half of the fourteenth century. Taken concurrently with the other causes, — communication with the Flemings; the conduct of the clergy; the tyranny of the feudal superiors; the rapacity of the crown; the reflections of the people themselves; and the forcible denunciations of certain religious reformers, who now began to arise, — and assuredly we have reasons enough for that spirit of resistance both to the spiritual and the civil powers, so general at this period.\*

At this crisis arose *John Wycliffe*, one of those mas- 1324  
 ter minds that are destined to take advantage of circum-  
 stances, and to influence ages unborn. Born near or 1384.  
 at Richmond, in Yorkshire, in 1324, and early entered  
 at Oxford the assiduity with which he applied to

\* Founded on the historians, and, more still, on the poets, of the fourteenth century.

scholastic learning, aided by great natural powers, enabled him to obtain the highest dignities of that university. In 1360, being master of Baliol, we find him engaged in an angry dispute with the friars, whose learning and subtlety rendered them more worthy antagonists than he could hope to meet in other ranks of the clergy. These disputes did not regard the essentials of religion; they rather concerned those useless questions, which during the present and preceding age were so freely debated in the schools. But from controversial the parties soon became personal enemies. Wycliffe bore all the antipathy of his order to these mongrel churchmen: he railed at their mendicity, which he represented as inconsistent with the precepts of Christ; and he proved that, while laying claim to extreme poverty, while renouncing the possession of every earthly good, they were living in the midst of wealth, and of all the enjoyments which wealth could purchase. Well might he deride their absurd distinction between the dominion and the use of things, — a sophism founded on a well-known definition of civil law; that while they represented all their possessions as the property of the pope, whose tenants they were, they employed every thing just as arbitrarily as if they held an unlimited dominion over it. The feelings engendered by this controversy appeared to have accompanied him through life; on every occasion he lashes these his first and most bitter enemies, often with great reason and justice, sometimes in a style of coarse invective. Nor did he bear much affection to the monks. In 1365, aided by archbishop Simon de Islip, the founder of Catherine Hall, he expelled Woodvill, the warden, and the fellows, who were all of the monastic profession, and he was himself appointed to the dignity. Islip died the following year; and the new archbishop, who defended the monks, ordered Wycliffe to make way for the former warden. He refused: the revenues of the hall were in consequence sequestered; yet he had still an appeal to the pope. But, as the

pontiff's decision was against him, he and his associates were expelled, and the monks restored. He had, however, preferment enough for any reasonable mind ; and he was not much influenced by avarice. Besides the profits arising from his lectures, he held two livings, the chief of which was Lutterworth. As he grew older, his controversial spirit grew warmer. From the commencement of his ministerial labours, he seems to have regarded with indignation the vices of the clergy. If his first attacks were directed against the friars, it was not that he was insensible of the worldly spirit, the luxurious living, and lax morals of the remaining portion of the clerical body. He now assailed all in their possessions, which he rightly considered as the root of the evil. In these assaults he could not possibly have any private feeling to gratify : he was actuated by a high sense of duty ; and he must have been equally so by uncommon courage, or he would not thus boldly have thrown down the gauntlet to the whole church. But he did not observe the proper line of proceeding. By teaching that poverty was obligatory on every minister of Christ's word ; that personal holiness was no less indispensable to the efficacy of the sacerdotal character ; that the want of either of necessity forfeited the grace of God ; that the priest who sinned was, *ipso facto*, deprived of the essential character of the priesthood ; that such a one ought to be deposed, and that it was a crime to pay him the accustomed tithes, he naturally evoked a feeling of hostility from those whose privileges and claims he thus condemned. Nor was he content with his own dissemination of his principles. He associated with him a body of " poor clerks ;" of men who, having no benefice to lose, and no hope of gaining one, might easily incur the obligation of poverty ; and they preached his doctrines with dauntless zeal. But whatever might be *their* motives, it is impossible to doubt the purity of *his*. He subjected himself to as many privations—he lived as meagrely and was clad as coarsely as the most rigid of the monastic orders ; he proclaimed that this was the

evangelical poverty necessary to all who would imitate our Saviour; and the inflexibility of his moral corresponded with his austerities. He was evidently an enthusiast, — a conscientious one, — and for that reason likely to do the more mischief. The church took the alarm; and in the last year of the third Edward's reign, he was summoned to answer for his novel opinions before the primate and the bishop of London in the church of St. Paul. But he was not without friends; by his recent attacks on the *temporal* authority of the pope, he had won the favour of the government, and at his trial he was attended by the duke of Lancaster and Percy earl marshal, whose influence would, it was hoped, intimidate the judges. That such was their object is evident from their behaviour. Lancaster in particular treated the prelates with insult; an altercation followed; the duke grew still more violent; and he so enraged the spectators, that his palace of the Savoy was plundered, and he himself just escaped with his life. On this occasion, Wycliffe made an apology, and escaped with a reprimand. It was not likely to have much effect on one who had felt strong in his own conviction that he was defending the truth, and that he might rely on the support of the powerful. From temporal he proceeded to spiritual warfare with the church, he and his inferior clerks promulgated his opinions on both points with new zeal, and in 1382, a synod convoked by the primate was assembled at London to condemn his propositions. Fourteen of them were declared to be dangerous; ten absolutely heretical; in fact, he had insinuated, that after the consecration of the bread and wine, the elements still retained their nature; and that consequently there was no such thing as transubstantiation, which he represented as a vain invention; as contrary no less to Scripture than to common sense. Yet, that he held the real presence is indisputable, both from his express words on the subject\*, and from his

\* "I acknowledge that the sacrament of the altar is very God's body in form of bread; but it is in another manner God's body than it is in heaven.

example. To the very last he celebrated mass with as much devotion as any other clergyman of the Roman catholic communion; and this he could not have done had he regarded the sacrament merely as a commemoration; had he not been fully convinced, that he was offering a *sacrifice*. His own words, however, explicitly acquaint us with his opinions; for he distinctly condemns as heretics those who held that nothing after consecration remained in the eucharist beyond the mere elements. But his denial of transubstantiation was enough: it revolted the feelings of the time; and neither the duke of Lancaster, to whom he appealed, nor the parliament, which had encouraged him so long as he confined his assaults to the temporalities and conduct of the clergy, would assist him. That in points of doctrine he should appeal to a lay tribunal, and make laymen the judges of recondite tenets of faith, was consistent enough with the opinions of one who taught that laymen might administer the sacraments,—that they might consecrate even our Lord's body; but it naturally cooled the attachment of his former supporters. They began to regard him as a bold visionary, who, unless he were arrested in his dangerous career, and taught in points of faith to submit to authority might, by his itinerant coadjutors, do much mischief. This impression was doubtless just: excellent as were the intentions of Wycliffe, he had not the calm powers of one who is required to define the limits of error and of truth. Hence it was that even Lancaster advised him to recognise the decisions of the church. To refuse might be dangerous; and though no man had greater intrepidity, he probably had no wish to sustain the crown of martyrdom. It is, however, equally pro-

For in heaven it is seen in the form and figure of flesh and blood; but in the sacrament God's body is a miracle of God in form of bread."—"We believe, as Christ and his apostles have taught us, that the sacrament of the altar, white and round, and unadulterated, like our bread, is, after consecration, the true God's body in form of bread; and if it be broken in three parts, as the church uses, or even in a thousand, every one of those parts is the same God's body." No Roman catholic divine, at any period, could have used more explicit language.

bable that he did not consider his slight difference with the church on the nature of the eucharist — for assuredly there is no gulf between the real presence and transubstantiation — as sufficient to encounter the risks before him. Yet, that he might at the same time satisfy his conscience, he composed a confession of faith so cautious, so full of scholastic subtleties, so pervaded by those nicer distinctions, which, as an accomplished disputant, he could introduce at pleasure, that by the synod (held at Oxford) it was regarded as orthodox, by his own partizans as a vindication of his own opinions. It may be said that there was something dishonourable in this studied ambiguity; but we at least are not disposed to condemn him. On the subject of the eucharist, he felt that, if his opinions were not novel, they were uncommon; and he might probably at times have his misgivings, whether, in deviating from the recognised line of orthodoxy, he was acting a wise or a humble part, — whether, of all his countrymen, he alone was infallible. On other points, where he felt more strongly, he was more firm. The tone in which he assailed the abuses of the papal power, found an echo in many a breast; for those who were most forward to acknowledge the legitimate dignity, were not slow to censure the monstrous usurpations of the popes. He boldly assailed the pope as Antichrist; and though suspended from all scholastic arts, and compelled to retire to his living at Lutterworth, his pen was active to the very last. At the close of 1384, while assisting at the altar, just as the host was elevated, he was seized with a stroke of palsy which in ten days brought him to his grave.\*

360 That Wycliffe held some dangerous doctrines begins  
to at length to be admitted.† He maintained that every  
1384.

\* Wycliffe, *Triologus*, lib. iv. Wilkins, *Concilia*, tom. iii. pp. 116—167. *passim*. Knighton, *de Eventibus Anglia*, lib. v. pp. 264—265. Knighton is very minute, and very severe on the opinions of Wycliffe, to whose talents and virtues, however, he bears willing testimony. Walsingham, *Historia*, pp. 190—284. *passim*. Lewis, *Works of Wycliffe, with Life*, pp. 1—251. Turner, *History*, vol. v. p. 181, &c. Lingard, *History*, vol. iii. p. 158, &c. On this subject, however, Mr. Turner is not to be followed.

† "Wycliffe held some erroneous opinions, some fantastic ones, and some

clergyman was imperatively bound to imitate the poverty no less than the virtues of Christ ; that his temporalities were given him for a specific purpose, — the honour of God, and the relief of the poor ; that if these temporalities were not thus expended, they might be and ought to be taken from the possessors ; that in such a case it was the duty of a layman to withhold the tithes and other sources of clerical emolument ; that if he continued to pay them, he rendered himself responsible for the sins of the minister ; that under no less a penalty than damnation, he was compelled to deprive a delinquent church of its possessions. A proposition which should make the illiterate laity judges, not merely of the conduct but of the doctrine of their pastors ; which should enable them to decide what was and what was not conformable with the precepts and example of Christ ; which should furnish selfishness with a pretext for eluding the obligation of supporting the altar, was, however monstrous in its nature and perilous in its consequences, too flattering not to be eagerly received. But the reformer went much further than this : by a mixture of feudal, theological, and scholastic subtlety, he shook the foundation of lay no less than of ecclesiastical possessions. The sum of his eleven arguments on this subject is, that the dominion or right of property is founded in grace ; and that it is forfeited when that grace is lost ; in other words, that men not religious, not in communion with Christ, ought not to possess any property whatever, which by implication should be taken from them and given to the saints. When a vassal commits treason, he is rightly punished by the forfeiture of his fief ; but sin is treason against God ; therefore the sinner forfeits whatever he holds of God, — all right to property, which, however derived through an inferior medium, is in fact held of God, the lord paramount, the sovereign

which, in their moral and political consequences, are most dangerous." — *Southey, Book of the Church*, i. 347. Mr. Turner omits whatever may place Wycliffe in a disadvantageous light.



of all. Hence, as his disciples preached, when a temporal baron or gentleman sinned, it was the bounden duty of the people to punish him! Now, without any reference to his religious doctrines, which in our view are of minor importance, what shall we say to such opinions as these, when boldly and perseveringly proclaimed by himself and his numerous associates to the populace. They had, in substance, been already proclaimed by one of Wycliffe's associates, John Ball, an itinerant preacher of no small ability. Ball was chaplain to Wat Tyler's ruffians; with what doctrine he edified them appears from the text of one sermon, — a text, let us remember, that completely embodies the opinions of Wycliffe himself: —

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman ? ”

Had the formidable insurrection of the Tyler succeeded no doubt there would have been an effectual levelling of ranks; for it had been seriously resolved to destroy every dignitary in the church, every baron in the state, every man who had rank and property; and thus reduce all mankind to the same equality. That this was no vain resolution, they proved by the eagerness with which they murdered every man of condition who fell in their way, from the archbishop of Canterbury down to the collectors of taxes, against whom their fury was unbounded. At length they proceeded to shed the blood of inferiors who did not declare for their party; and on every side they consumed the houses and substance of such as they suspected of being hostile to them. That they were instigated to these excesses by the itinerant preachers, is undoubted: it is positively affirmed by contemporary writers, and it is credible, inasmuch as the opinions we have mentioned had necessarily this tendency. In these excesses Wycliffe had personally no part; he was residing on his living at Lutterworth; and if he had been present he would certainly have condemned them; but they were instigated by his disciples and associates; and

they were the natural offspring of his opinions. On him, therefore, as on them, must lie the same share of the responsibility for the crimes committed at this period.—With these facts, with the nature and tendency of these opinions before us, what must be the judgment of every unbiassed reader? Obviously, that the good effected by this celebrated man is more than counterbalanced by the mischief of which he was the undesigning cause. So long as he lashed acknowledged abuses; so long as he exposed the usurpations of the pope, the worldly spirit of the clergy, the vices of the friars, the superstitions with which Christianity was said to be interwoven; indulgences, sanctuary, pilgrimage, hired masses, supererogation, absurd modes of penance, &c.—so long as he made war merely on the possessions of the church, the popular mind went along with him. From the rolls of parliament, the incidental testimony of the chroniclers, and the literary, especially the poetical remains of the times,—for Chaucer was not the only poet disposed to the reformation contemplated by Wycliffe,—there is evidence enough to prove that the commons, and some even of the barons, were prepared to go any length in the spoliation of church property. Had the eighth Henry instead of the second Richard reigned, the lands of the church would assuredly have passed from the monks to the courtiers\*,—with what advantage to the country, let the consequences of our own reformation prove. So long, we repeat, as Wycliffe confined his hostilities to such objects, he was safe enough; but when he began to broach the new and monstrous proposition to which we have adverted,—that clerical and lay property ought to be forfeited in case of sin against God; when he thus assailed the foundations of human society, however the populace might applaud, all who had any thing to lose fell from him. But his principles had taken root; by his disciples and associates.

\* That the plunder was designed is certain. One influential man was heard to boast that within a short time he would have 1000 marks a year from the abbey of St. Albans.

they were actively disseminated, — with what success let the insurrection of Wat the Tyler serve as an illustration. But let us not be misunderstood. No such excesses were ever contemplated by Wycliffe, whose morals were as pure as his opinions were sincere, whom we shall not hesitate to call an able and virtuous man. And it must be recollected that these excesses were not caused wholly by his principles; that, as we have before observed, there were other causes at work. And it is equally certain, that to him alone must not be attributed the religious novelties of the period. Some of them were unquestionably of continental growth: the very name given to the reformers, *Lollards*, to denote their psalm-singing, is German; in the Netherlands particularly they had for some time flourished, and numbers had emigrated to, while others were in constant communication with, this kingdom. It would, therefore, be deep injustice to make him alone responsible for the disorders of the times. But yet, in those disorders he was, however unintentionally, a powerful concurrent cause. The monstrous propositions we have mentioned relative to temporal possessions, were enough to tear asunder the bonds of any society. Some of his religious opinions, too, were equally pernicious. On them we have no wish to dwell. We have said enough, we hope, to show that a few were too pernicious to be tolerated. Of this fact, however, no notice is taken by his modern admirers, who carefully record his laudable opposition to superstition and to ecclesiastical rapacity, and the conformity of some of his tenets with those of the present established church. But what are we to think of this elaborate display of the good, this total suppression of the evil, in the principles of Wycliffe? What sentiment other than that of indignation is it capable of exciting in any mind to which truth is dearer than party interest? We cannot surely be charged with any prejudice against this celebrated man. Though in accordance with the most solemn of our duties, historic impartiality, we have adverted to—our limits will

not permit us fully to expose—some of his dangerous opinions, (and opinions more dangerous were never broached by any individual,) we have borne cheerful testimony to the good he attempted to effect, to the purity not only of his morals but of his motives. It is evident that Wycliffe was not aware of the consequences of his own doctrines. Though an admirable logician; though deeply versed in the subtleties of the schools, and most dexterous in the use of his scholastic weapons, he was no philosopher. He could with unparalleled success tread the mazes of dialectics; nobody could exceed him in the knowledge of mood and figure; nobody possessed greater readiness as well as acuteness of intellect; but if he was thus unrivalled in the construction of a syllogism, assuredly he had little of that comprehensive power which pursues a truth into its remotest ramifications. He could vigorously grasp a single proposition; he could not build a system of truth on the expanded basis of induction. His mind was rather acute than profound, rather vehement than forcible, rather minute in its investigations than enlarged in its range. This fact must account for the obstinacy with which he adhered to his most pernicious opinions; whether it be a justification of those opinions; whether the motive can consecrate the deed; whether ignorance may legitimately be assigned as a plea for mischief, we shall not stop to enquire. For our own parts we can only say, that while condemning his errors, we applaud both the good he effected and that which he attempted.\*

The opinions of Wycliffe, as we may readily suppose, did not die with him. In fact, in a few years after his death the number of his disciples is said to have been beyond computation; that London, especially, was full of

\* Knighton and Walsingham, and the Concilia of Wilkins, ubi supra. Add the fourth book of the Trialogus of Wycliffe, the most important of his works. Compare the preceding sketch with those authorities; with Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*; with Fleury, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* (sub annis); with the *Biographia Britannica*, Art. Wycliffe; with the recent lives of Wycliffe in the histories of Turner, Lingard, and Southey, and we fear not that the view we have taken of this celebrated man will be approved by the candid reader.

them ; that if two persons were met in the street, one was sure to be a Lollard. Nor were they merely formidable from their numbers: the activity with which they disseminated their levelling principles ; the menacing language which they began to use, — for they had some of their persuasion among the lords, and many in the commons' house, — that the earth should soon be possessed by the saints ; plots which were laid for the destruction alike of church and state, produced, as they well might, considerable alarm in the government. From a most distinguished writer\*, one who is hostile enough to the Roman catholic church, and favourable enough to its opponents, of whatever nation or period they may be, we have this honest admission : — “ Undoubtedly the Lollards were highly dangerous at this time : if there were some among them whose views and wishes did not go beyond a just and salutary reformation, the greater number were eager for havoc, and held opinions which are incompatible with the peace of society. They would have stript the churches, destroyed the monasteries, confiscated the church lands, and proclaimed the principle that the saints should possess the earth. The public safety required that such opinions should be repressed ; and, founded as they were in gross error, and leading to direct and enormous evil, the church would have deserved the approbation of impartial posterity if it had proceeded temperately and quietly in repressing them.” Every syllable of this candid statement is confirmed by the records of the times. It is a fact which, though dishonesty may and does conceal, no sophistry can invalidate, that these fanatics, who consisted, with some few exceptions, of the most ignorant, profligate and debased of the people, were threatening the existence not only of all government, but of society itself. It is little to the credit of Richard II. that he suffered the principles of these men to be propagated without interruption : had Wycliffe been stopt at the commencement of his mis-

\* Southey, Book of the Church, i. 349.

guided career, had he been suffered indeed to retain what *doctrinal* opinions he pleased, but compelled to refrain from the promulgation of such as tended to the spoliation of the church and the subversion of the state, well would it have been for the security no less than the honour of the country. But if we thus censure that feeble monarch, we must execrate the intolerance of his successor. In the very first year of the fourth Henry's reign, an act was passed to make heresy a capital offence.—a novelty unknown to the earlier periods of our history:—

“ This reign supplies the first instance of a capital execution for the theological crime of heresy. Whether it were that men refused to distinguish between fact and opinion, and on that account visited erroneous opinion with the same punishment as criminal action, it may not be easy to determine; but we unfortunately find that in almost every country, whatever may have been the religious belief of the sovereign and the legislature, the severest penalties have repeatedly, and till a very late period, been enacted against dissent from the doctrines established by law. Sir Edward Coke, the great luminary of the English bar in the reign of queen Elizabeth, teaches that heresy is so extremely and fearfully punished, because it is a crime not against human but divine majesty; that it is an infectious leprosy of the soul; and must therefore be cut off, lest it diffuse the contagion. It was perhaps some such metaphysical and fallacious reasoning which persuaded the first Christian emperors to class heresy among the offences liable to civil punishment; it was certainly their example which induced the princes of the northern nations to adopt, after their conversion, similar regulations.”\*

All this is very true; but we should have been glad to perceive these observations of so eminent a critic pervaded by a stronger feeling of reprobation. Persecution for religious *opinions*, in any form, and under whatever provocation, we cordially and utterly detest; nor will we cease, while we can wield the pen, to brand with infamy those, whether Roman catholics or protestants— and he who does not know that Elizabeth's

\* Lingard, History of England, iii. 325.

reign is in this respect infamous enough, must be ignorant indeed,—who consign to the stake persons of a different faith. Of those who suffered in consequence of this atrocious act, *de hæretico comburendo*, some were virtuous and venerable, however mistaken men; but there were others who suffered as much for treason as for heresy. Among the latter may assuredly be classed sir John Oldcastle, the lord Cobham, whose hostility to the Roman catholic church appears, in the estimation of modern writers, completely to have cancelled the guilt of his attempt to overturn the government of his country. Into the tragical scenes which followed we will not enter, first, because they are already sufficiently known; secondly, because our limits will not allow us to compose a book of martyrs; thirdly, because our indignation would, we feel, hurry us into expressions of execration unworthy of historic dignity.\*

## II. Literature.

On so vast a field as the Literature of England during the Middle Ages, it is, perhaps, imprudent even to glance, in limits so circumscribed as these; especially as a single section of that field—our ancient poetry—would, to do it justice, require many more volumes than the present compendium. But as, to advert, however briefly, to the intellectual character of nations, is an integral part of our plan, we must, however reluctantly, (a reluctance arising from the impossibility of doing justice to any *one division* of the subject,) devote the following pages to the consideration of a few among the more eminent writers of this kingdom. These few must be chiefly such as characterise the age; avoiding, however, names in any considerable degree familiar to the English reader. In the preceding section we have already adverted to as many of the writers, purely ecclesiastical, as our limits will allow.

\* The same authorities.

1. **LATIN LITERATURE.** — Among the Latin writers of this nation, not noticed in the preceding pages, our *historians* occupy a distinguished place. There is no other country in Europe, France and Italy excepted, which possesses so many, and, on the whole, so useful recorders of events. From Ingulf of Croyland, to Harding and Ross, there is a list of names of which any people might be proud. In some of them we find sufficient of the marvellous; but in all cases, with one or two exceptions, there is no difficulty in distinguishing the true from the false. If the religious prejudices of the writers induced them to dwell with satisfaction on legends, which a more rational taste has long exploded, they have yet the great merit of registering events as they happened; and that not in the barren, meagre manner of chroniclers in other countries, but often with a graphic, however simple description, which at once instructs and charms. The chief exception to which we allude,—viz. where there is any difficulty in separating fact from fiction,—is *Geoffrey of Monmouth*; and yet, perhaps, even here there is much less than we are apt to suppose. In times comparatively modern, there has been much controversy as to the sources whence the archdeacon derived his information; and whether any, or what portion, may be assigned to his own invention. The account which he himself gives cannot reasonably be called in question. He asserts, that his authorities were collections in the Armorican, or ancient British language, made by Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, at whose request he translated them into Latin. It is barely possible that he added such traditions as he had learned in his native principality (Wales), and that he embellished what he derived from both sources. But, from internal evidence; from his frequent opposition to the Welch traditions, and from certain expressions in the work itself, we are inclined to the opinion that he added little of his own. That the foundation, we may add, the superstructure, is not his, is beyond doubt, for many



reasons, of which these four are the chief:— In the first place, he was incapable of so much invention: no man of his, or perhaps of any other age, could have sat down and produced from his brain so connected, so complicated, and so imaginative a chronicle. In the second place, for some, even of his wildest relations, there are hints in a writer three centuries more ancient, his countryman Nennius, and in some lives of Welch saints\*, which were certainly written a century before his time. In the third place, writers contemporary with him allude to the same marvellous events. Thus Florence of Worcester, who wrote somewhat before Geoffrey, has some germs of his fables: thus also Alured of Beverley, who, though he certainly followed the Welshman, has some things not to be found in that writer: thus William of Malmesbury, who, though he does not condescend to admit, yet plainly indicates, his acquaintance with them: and Henry of Huntingdon must also be admitted to have known them. For some of their incidents these writers *must* have been indebted to some other source than the archdeacon; for there are things relative to the Britons, which we should in vain seek in his work. Fourthly, in Armorican records, confessedly prior to the time of Geoffrey, we read, that the lore which has been asserted to be his own invention, was popular in that province. That, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the fame of Arthur was gigantic, nobody acquainted with the literature of the period will attempt to deny. Thus Alanus de Insulis informs us, that if any one in Brittany denied that Arthur was still alive, he would be stoned to death. “Where,” he asks, “is not that hero known? Where is the country, from Asia to Britain, where his deeds are not celebrated?” From these considerations, we do not see how any doubt can remain that Geoffrey was a mere translator; and, in

\* See the *Lives* of St. David, St. Dubricius, St. Gildas, St. Gundlei, and others, most of which are certainly rather before the *Chronicle* of Geoffrey.

some degree, perhaps, a collector of the traditions of his country. The three centuries which had intervened between him and Nennius, had doubtless given rise to the interminable fables he has so carefully recorded: but many of them could not have been invented in Wales; they were of Armorican growth,—a country more fertile in romantic lore than perhaps any other in Europe. From Brittany, and not from Wales, the Norman troubadours and tale writers derive their materials. Hence there is every probability that Geoffrey was really indebted to the Armorican collections to which we have alluded, for the chief incidents of his Chronicle. If the subject were investigated with the learning and accuracy it deserves, we think it would be found, that both Armorica and Wales derived many of their legendary fragments from a prior source. This at least is certain, that traces of many, the antiquity of which cannot be doubted, are discernible in the fictions of Normandy, Provence, Germany, Scandinavia, and even of the East. With the divergent stream, however, of European fiction, we have nothing to do; our object is to show, in a few brief words, the improbability of Geoffrey's having invented any considerable portion, or even any portion whatever, of his celebrated Chronicle. Contrary, therefore, to Ritson and Turner\*, and agreeing with two more able and learned critics, Ellis and Price, we exculpate this much abused Welshman from the ill-founded charge of imposture.

“ The fidelity of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the execution of his labours; at least his scrupulous exactness in preparing the reader's mind for any important deviation from, or suppression of, his original, has been so satisfactorily established, that we might cite his example as an instance of good faith that would have done honour to a more critical age, and shining

\* Mr. Turner while he defends the historic veracity of some Welsh bards, who have fables not less outrageous than those of Geoffrey, charges, nevertheless, the archdeacon with imposture. Here, however, the judgment only is to blame; but what are we to think of the calm impartiality of the writer who could make Thomas à Becket a demon, and Henry VIII. a saint?

conspicuously amid the general laxity of his own. The licences he has allowed himself in the shape of amplification, are, to all appearance, nothing more than a common rhetorical exercise, inherited by the middle ages from the best days of antiquity; and the letters and speeches introduced, admitting them to be his own composition, are the necessary appendage of the school in which he was disciplined. To charge him with 'imposture and forgery' for pursuing such a course, is as just as it would be to doubt the general probity of Livy, for a similar practice in the Roman history; and to question his veracity because the subject of his translation is a record of incredible events, a degree of hypercriticism which would only have been resorted to by a mind eager to escape conviction.'

This is an interesting subject. The work of Geoffrey has been regarded, in more recent times, not so much as a history, as the foundation of all the interminable romances relative to king Arthur, and the Knights of the Table Round. This opinion we hold to be as erroneous as the other. The Chronicle in question is no more entitled to be considered as the parent of our chivalric fiction, than as an historic authority: both that Chronicle and this fiction are derived from a common source. "The concurrent testimony of the French romances is now admitted to have proved the existence of a large body of fiction relative to Arthur, in the province of Brittany; and, while they confirm the assertions of Geoffrey in this single particular, it is equally clear that they have neither echoed his language, nor borrowed his materials. Every farther investigation of the subject only tends to support the opinion maintained by Mr. Douce; that the tales of Arthur and his knights, which have appeared in so many forms, and under the various titles of *St. Graal*, *Tristan de Leonnois*, *Lancelot du Lac*, &c. were not immediately borrowed from the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but from his Armoric originals." Ignorance and prejudice have reigned long enough; and we have reason to believe that both are about to be banished from this branch of literature. A calm philosophic enquiry, aided by extensive erudition, into the origin and progress of romantic fiction in

Europe, will not, we hope, long remain a desideratum.\*

But if Geoffrey's work cannot be regarded as the sole original of our chivalric fictions, there can be no doubt that it has greatly contributed to their formation. Its influence has been European; to it a vast and interesting branch of literature has been much indebted; for this reason, and because many passages of the present chapter would otherwise be unintelligible without it †, we must not dismiss it without a very brief analysis. It is divided into nine books. 1. The first, which is the most considerable, and probably wholly fabulous, extends from the birth of Brutus to the introduction of Christianity into Britain. The expulsion from Italy of that celebrated great-grandson of Æneas; his exploits in Greece, viz. his conquest of Pandrasus; his winning of a royal princess, and, with her, a bridal present of a splendid navy; his re-embarkation in quest of adventures; his exploits on the coasts of Mauritania and of Aquitaine, where, to his joy, he finds another body of Trojan exiles; his subjugation of the *duke of Aquitaine, one of the twelve peers of France*; his ultimate settlement in Britain, where his three sons, Lochrine, Albanach, and Camber, reign, after his death, over the three divided principalities, Locgria, Albania, and Cambria; the history of his descendants, enlivened by such delectable episodes as King Lear and his three daughters; their exploits with the princes of the Continent, especially of Norway, Gaul, Germany, and Italy; the conquest of Rome itself by Brennus, an undoubted British prince;

\* Huet, *Traité sur l'Origine des Romains*, p. 118. (edit. Paris. an. vii.). Sheringham, *de Origine Gentis Anglorum*, p. 124, &c. Camden's *Britannia* (edit. Gough) vol. iv. (we have mislaid the reference to the page). Nicholson, *English Historical Library*, p. 26. Ritson, *Metrical Romances*, vol. i. (Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy). Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, vol. i. Introduction, sections 2 and 4. Percy, *Dissertation on the Ancient Romances*, book iii. Introduction (edit. London, 1775). Turner, *History of England*, vol. iv. p. 218. Warton, *History of English Poetry by Price*, vol. i. (Editor's Preface). Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. Introduction. Several of the hagiologic lives in this volume of Wharton, prove, beyond a doubt, the view we have taken in the text.

† See pages 66—74.

the single combat of Nennius, brother of Cassibelanus, with Julius Cæsar, in which a famous sword is won by the British hero ; the second descent of Cæsar, unsuccessful as the former ; and the ultimate submission of Britain, through the marriage of its king, Arviragus, with Gënnissa, daughter of the emperor Claudian, form the chief subjects of this delectable book. 2. The second embraces the period from the introduction of Christianity to the descent of the Saxons. It contains as perverse distortion of real facts as can well be imagined. It teaches us that Armorica was conquered, and bestowed by the monarch of Britain on one of his numerous vassals, Conan Meriadoc ; that Ursula, daughter of the duke of Cornwall, was sent over with 11,000 noble, and 60,000 plebeian virgins, as wives of the British officers in Armorica, the women of which were not exactly to the taste of the conquerors ; that the ships were dispersed by a storm, and the maidens fell into the hands of their enemies ; that Britain is invaded by the Picts and the Belgians, but is relieved by Constantine, son of the British king of Armorica ; that Constantine is elected king of the country he had thus saved ; that, on his death, he leaves it to his three sons, Constantine, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Uther Pendragon, of whom more hereafter. Of these, the eldest took the cowl at Winchester, but was afterwards invested with the ensigns of royalty ; that his monastic habits, however, unfitted him for the duty of defending the kingdom ; that he was defeated, and at length slain ; not by the invaders, but by his own steward, sir Vortigern, who had basely intrigued for the purpose ; that, as the brothers of Constantine were too young to succeed, sir Vortigern was intrusted with the government ; that he intended to despatch the two heirs, when, by two faithful barons, they were removed into Brittany ; that several of his barons rebelled against him ; and that, to secure himself on his throne, he called in the Saxons under Hengist. 3. But the third exhibits a still greater distortion of history,—the most romantic fictions being introduced

to account for the success of the Saxons. To Vortigern's marriage with Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, and the successive wives of the invaders, we have before alluded \* : the rest of the book is of the same veracious character. 5. Passing over the fourth book, which is an episode, containing the prophecies of Merlin (of whom more hereafter), the fifth opens with the arrival of the two rightful heirs from Brittany, who defeat, dethrone, and burn Vortigern in a tower, in which he had taken refuge. Aurelius Ambrosius being now raised to the throne of his father, triumphs over the Saxons, restores the churches and monasteries, and erects, to the honour of the British chiefs slain by the treachery of Hengist, a noble monument on Salisbury Plain, consisting of magical stones brought by Merlin the prophet from the hill of Kildare in Ireland, whither, ages before, they had been carried from Africa. Aurelius is poisoned by a Saxon leech, just as the country was invaded by Pascentius, a son of Vortigern, aided by Gildemanus, king of Ireland. 6. Book the sixth contains the reign of Uther, brother of the deceased king. Having defeated the invaders, and buried his brother within the area of Stonehenge, he assumes as his standard the head of a dragon, — hence his surname, Pen-dragon. With equal success, he triumphs over “the rebellious people, the Scots,” whom he reclaims from their barbarism. Now surely he deserved to be crowned, and a famous feast there was at Winchester ; but, on this very occasion, he fell in love with Igerne, wife of his vassal Gorlois, duke of Cornwall. The lady is virtuous ; her husband is naturally offended at his seductive attempts ; both retire to their duchy, which is laid waste by the king, who is resolved to punish the duke, and to obtain the lady. But, as she had taken refuge in the castle of Tintadel, erected on the summit of a steep precipice, and defended on three sides by the sea, he could never have gained his purpose but for the aid of Merlin. By that famous enchanter, he is transformed into the like-

\* See Vol. III. p. 6.

ness of Gorlois \* ; he obtains admission to the castle, and enjoys the lady, who, thus betrayed, becomes the mother of the renowned Arthur ; soon Gorlois is slain in a sally, and Uther marries the widow. At length, after a long and glorious reign, the aged monarch dies, his last exploit being a splendid victory over the Saxons, who had again presumed to invade the country. 7. The next book contains the reign of the renowned Arthur, who, on his father's death, was only fifteen years of age. Most of his life is spent in fighting and in victory. His first victory, over the combined Piets, Scots, and Saxons, under king Colgrin, was splendid, but not decisive ; after a second, he lays siege to York ; but, knowing that an immense German force is advancing, he retires, and, by his ambassadors, craves the aid of Hoel, king of Brittany. Hoel lands at Southampton ; the two kings join their forces, march to Lincoln, which was then besieged by the invaders, obtain a victory, pursue the retreating pagans into Caledonia, and at length compel them to swear that they will leave the island and return to Germany. They depart, but only to disembark on another part of the coast, and recommence their ravages.† Arthur, breathing revenge, marches into Somersetshire, where he meets the enemy. On this occasion he is more than usually solemn in his preparations : placing on his head a good helmet, in the form of a dragon ; throwing over his shoulders the noble shield, Priwen, on which was engraven the portrait of holy Mary, the mother of God ; girt with the most excellent sword Caliburn, fabricated in the isle of Avalon ; grasping in his hand the trusty lance Ron ; and, invoking the Virgin, he rushes into the battle, and, with his formidable sword, kills 470 of the enemy. The victory is decisive ; Colgrin, and his brother Baldulf, fall, and Cheldric retreats. This success was gained at Mount Badon, thus immortalised

\* This fable is probably derived from the Alcmena of Plautus.

† These are evidently the exploits of Alfred the Great against the Danes, which tradition ascribes to its favourite hero Arthur against the Saxons.

in the British annals. Cadur, duke of Cornwall, is sent in pursuit of the fugitives, while Arthur himself hastens to join Hoel, his ally, then sick at Aldud (probably Dumbarton), and besieged by an army of Picts and Scots; he soon drives them into Morayshire, and the islands of Loch Lomond. Here we are favoured with a description of these islands. The number is sixty; each contains a very lofty rock; on the top of each rock is an eagle's nest; and these sixty eagles annually meet, to portend, by their screams, the events which are to happen the following year. Into this lake sixty rivers also run, yet there is but one outlet. This, he thought a very curious lake; the islands and prophetic eagles were curious too; but there was something still, — a square pond, exactly twenty feet each way, and as many deep, containing at each angle a peculiar sort of fish, these four sorts never mixing with each other. Of course the British now force the fugitives to submit; the country is conquered and divided. To his brother-in-law, Loth, he gives Lothian; and to sir Anguselus, brother of Loth, he gives the throne of the Scots; and to Urien, another brother, the province of Murray. After many other victories in Ireland, Iceland, the Orkneys, and Denmark; after marrying Guenlvara (the celebrated Guenever), a lady of Roman extraction who had been brought up at the court of his vassal, Cadur, duke of Cornwall, he returns to Britain, where he passes twelve years in peace. This period, however he resolves shall not pass unemployed; he knows that war must one day revisit him; and he invites to his court the most distinguished warriors in all Christendom, who may keep alive among his people a passion for military glory, and an emulation in arms. That court, in fact, became celebrated above all others on the face of the earth; not for valour only, but for courtesy: no one who aspired to a distinguished name, no one even of noble birth, could consider he had much chance of success, unless he were taught the martial exercises, and were dubbed knight, at the British court. Seeing him-



self encompassed by so gallant a band, Arthur did not think there would be any impossibility in conquering the world. His first expedition was to Norway, which he conquered and bestowed on Loth, whose son, sir Gawain, he knighted. His next was into Gaul, against the imperial lieutenant, whom he kills in single combat. In the end, he conquers the whole country, where he spends nine years. In a court plenary at Paris, he places Aquitaine under the sway of Hoel, confers Neustria on Bedwen, his butler; on Caius (Kay), his ewer-bearer, Anjou, and returns to Britain to be crowned. Never was coronation so splendid as that which now took place at Winchester. It was attended by a long train of tributary kings, and by the twelve peers of Gaul (also his vassals), led by sir Guerin of Chartrain. But scarcely is this ceremony performed, when an ambassador arrives from the Roman emperor, demanding the tribute formerly paid by the Britons (throughout the Chronicle there is a most beautiful confusion of times and circumstances), and Arthur resolves to punish the impudence of the emperor by invading Italy. At the head of a vast force (183,200 horse, and nobody knows how many infantry), he hastens to Barfleur; but scarcely was he landed, when he hears that a wicked giant had carried off the daughter of Hoel to a rock called Mount St. Michael's. Accompanied by sir Bedwen and sir Kay, he proceeds in a boat to examine the giant's abode. On opposite points of the vast mount he perceives a fire; not knowing at which he may find the giant, he lands, and ascends the hill towards the smaller, where he soon hears the screams of a woman. Drawing his sword, and advancing nearer, he sees an old woman weeping over a fresh grave, which proved to be that of Hoel's daughter, who had died of fright in the first embrace of the monster. The purpose, however, seems not to have been effected, for the old woman herself had been immediately ravished, apparently to her great grief. Arthur assures her she need not fear a second violation, and hastens to the next fire, before which sat the giant,

roasting the remains of some pigs, which he had half eaten while raw. Grim was the monster's visage, besmeared as it was with the blood of the swine; but, in future, hogs, young maidens, and old women might rejoice; for, after a hard battle, the huge creature fell. Arthur proceeds on his journey, and, near Autun, triumphs over the imperial forces; but the advantage is dearly bought by the death of Bedwen and Kay. Having subdued Dauphiny and Savoy, the hero is in full march for Rome, when he is recalled by the alarming news that his nephew Modred, whom, with his queen, he had left regent of the kingdom, had seized both crown and queen, and entered into an alliance with Saxons, Picts, and Scots. Landing at Sandwich, Arthur meets and overcomes Modred, who retreats to Winchester, while the queen takes the veil in the convent of St. Julius at Chester. Near Winchester, Modred is again defeated, and pursued into Cornwall. A third battle deprives the traitor of life; but Arthur himself is mortally wounded, and carried away to the isle of Avalon, after appointing as his successor Constantine, son of Cadur, duke of Cornwall. 8. Book the eighth contains strange distortions of historical facts. Under the five successors of Arthur, the country is weakened by war, until the dominions of the last (Cateric) are bounded within Cornwall, Wales, Lancashire, and Cumberland. The arrival of St. Augustine does not much add to the welfare of the Britons; for, quarrelling with the monks of Bangor, he retained great antipathy to the ancient inhabitants, and exasperated his Saxon converts against them. 9. The last book exhibits a confusion of names, dates, and events, as beautiful as any other part of this notable Chronicle. Cadvan, a British prince, was elected the nominal sovereign by the rest, to carry on the war against Ethelbert, king of Kent; who, in like manner, was the bretwalda, or chief of the Saxon princes.\* But the two potentates became most intimate

\* We begin to think that the dignity of Bretwalda was one merely military, though for life; yet, as he would have the nominal disposal at

friends ; so intimate, that when the queen of Ethelbert was put away by her husband, she hastened to Cadvan, in the hopes that *his* influence would restore her to her place and dignity : but Ethelbert was too incensed to forgive. His queen, who was pregnant, remained at Cadvan's court, and was delivered of a prince named Edwin ; and, at the same time, the queen of Cadvan gave birth to a British prince, Cadwallo. The young princes were nursed together, and became as intimate friends as ever their fathers had been. In time, Cadwallo became head of the Britons, Edwin of the Saxons ; but they at length quarrelled, and went to war. Cadwallo, being defeated, fled to Ireland ; and, in his efforts to return and fight for his paternal inheritance, he was always thwarted by the arts of a magician at the court of Edwin. Accompanied by his nephew, Brian, he proceeds to Brittany, to solicit aid ; on his way he is wrecked on a certain island, which appears to be Guernsey, where he falls sick, and for some time will taste no food. At length, however, he is seized with a violent longing for venison, and Brian goes out to shoot ; but finding no wild animal on the island, the devoted knight cuts a slice off his own posterior, cooks it, and presents it to his uncle, who, being ignorant of the fact, pronounces it, to be marvellously good, and recovers his health through it. Salomon, king of Armorica, is willing enough to aid his ally, but the magician must first be removed, or human force will avail nothing. Brian returns to Britain in disguise, goes to Edwin's court, stabs the conjurer, escapes to Exeter, and proclaims Cadwallo. He is soon assailed by Penda, king of Mercia ; but he maintains his ground until Cadwallo arrives from Armorica with a large army. The siege

least, of the whole force of the Saxons, it would not be unattended with much consideration, perhaps with power. It seems to have been exactly similar to the authority possessed by the British prince who happened for a similar purpose to be elected chief of the rest by his allies and countrymen. This practice had always prevailed in Britain, from the descent of Julius Cæsar, who found Cassibetan in possession of this superiority. Might not the Saxons imitate in this respect the policy of the Britons ?

of Exeter is raised ; Penda forced to do homage ; the dominions of Edwin invaded, and that prince himself slain in the battle of Hatfield.—We need not continue the analysis ; the few remaining events of Cadwallo's reign, and that of his son Cadwallador, not possessing much interest. The preceding glance at the contents of this curious work, will exhibit the care with which the Britons, both of Armorica and Wales, distorted facts to please their princes, and to account for the reverses of their forefathers. The truth is, that the chief events, both of Armorican and of English history, are strangely confounded together ; and the victories of the Saxon kings over the Danes, are ingeniously transferred to the British princes over the Saxons. The chivalric part of the relation,—the twelve peers of France, and the wars with the Roman emperors—evidently refer to the recent struggles of Brittany for its independence ; and some allusions there are to African and other kings, which were derived from an Arabian source. That the tales of the Arabs of Spain were not unknown to the Christians of France, is abundantly certain, both from the numerous romances relating to Charlemagne and his peers, — the Frank and the British hero were evidently confounded, — and from actual fictions in the Arabic language. One of these fictions is well known to have been current in Provence, Brittany, and Normandy ; and the Chronicle of the Cid itself was probably, what it professed to be, a translation from an Arabic original. The work of Geoffrey was not considered very veracious, even in his own time. Hear Giraldus Cambrensis. In the neighbourhood of Chester (Lewen Gwent), there was a Welshman named Melanius, who having one night made an assignation with a beautiful damsel, met her, as he thought ; but he found, to his horror, that the object of his embraces was a rough, hairy, hideous demon. Through this amour he for years lost his senses ; but afterwards it was found to have produced one great advantage, — he could distinguish demons in every place. He could see one on

the lips of the liar, in the pages of a false book, in the bed of the gluttonous or lustful monk. When more than usually assailed by the fiends, he caused the Gospel of St. John to be placed on his bosom, when away they flew like birds; but if he happened to take up the history of the Britons by Geoffrey ap Arthur, they re-appeared in such swarms as to cover both the book and himself.\*

That we may have no need to revert to this famed archdeacon, we may observe, that he was a poet as well as an historian. His "Vita Merlini," consisting of above 1500 hexameter verses, is a curiosity: it is more romantic, if that be possible, than even the Chronicle: we will briefly advert to its contents. This Life gives us no account of the prophet's parentage; it introduces him, for the first time, on the eve of a battle between Gwendolan, governor of Scotland, on the one side, and Peredeo, a king of the Strathelyde Britons, and Rhydderch (Rüderic), the British king of Cumberland, on the other. Merlin is a prince of Dermetia (Dyffid), and brother-in-law of his Cumbrian majesty. Of course he takes the side of his countrymen; but in the battle he loses three brothers, whom he honourably inters at *Varia Capella* (Falkirk), passes three days and nights over their graves in lamentation, becomes mad, and rushes from the sight of men into the forests of Caledonia. He is followed, at his sister's orders (queen of Rhydderch), by a minstrel, who, by singing some tender strains, — such as were likely to make an impression on him from their connection with his past adventures, — endeavours, and not without success, to restore him to society. Accompanied by the bard, the prophet hastens to the court of Rhydderch; but — Geoffrey is not without point — the crowd of court idlers so annoy him, that he relapses into his madness; he in-

\* Galfridus Monumetensis, de Origine et Gestis Regum Britannicæ, lib. i.—ix. (in multis capitulis). Daru, Histoire de Bretagne, tom. i. passim. See also History of Spain and Portugal (CAR. CVC.), vol. ii. Appendix. Giraldus Cambrensis, Itinerarium Cambriae, lib. i. cap. 5.

sists on departing ; but the king, being unwilling to part with him, causes him to be bound. He becomes silent and melancholy ; but his enlargement is at hand. The queen passing through the hall where the king was sitting, was kindly embraced by her royal mate, and made to sit by him ; when, suddenly observing a leaf entangled in her hair, he throws it in sport on the ground. Merlin, who was present, here burst into a loud fit of laughter. When a prophet laughs there must be meaning in it ; and great was the king's curiosity to know the reason ; but he refuses to say a word until an oath is taken that he shall immediately be released. He then declares that the queen his sister had just been with her lover in an arbour strewed with leaves ; and that the complaisance with which Rhydderch had received this evidence of his partner's guilt, was comical enough to make any body laugh. To the king, however, the discourse is any thing but comical : he turns from the queen in disgust ; but when was a woman at a loss for words ? She protests that her spiteful brother is a false seer, and engages to prove him one. Taking a young page by the hand, she asks him what death the boy will die. By falling from a rock, was the reply. The same boy is now so effectually disguised as not to be known, and brought up again with the same question. He will meet with his death among the branches of a tree, was the answer. The queen, exulting at this blow to his prophetic skill, causes the same page to be clad as a damsel, and brought up a third time. The third oracle is different from either — that the death will be drowning. Eventually the prophet is right : some years afterwards, the page while hunting fell from his horse down a rock into a river ; in his descent he was caught by a tree ; but so that his feet only were in the branches, his head being under water. This catastrophe could not be foreseen ; and Rhydderch, after this manifest exposure of Merlin's want of skill, takes the queen to his favour ; and she — here the author loses sight of human nature — not only

forgives the prophet, but anxiously joins in begging him to stay. When she perceives that he is obstinately bent on retiring to the forests, she asks him what is to become of his lady Gwendolen. must *she* partake his wild life, or live henceforth as a widow, or take another husband? Let her take another, if she pleases, was the reply, and she shall not want a suitable marriage present; but added, that in this case it would be just as well not to let the second husband meet *him*. After an abode of some time with the wild beasts of the woods, Merlin one day perceives that the planet Venus has a strange appearance, which portends no less than that his lady is preparing to remarry. This trifle does not much affect him: on the contrary, he remembers his promise of a present; and collecting together a respectable herd of stags and deer, he mounts one of the animals, and rides, on the very day of the marriage, to Gwendolen's dwelling, with the bridal gift. The new husband seeing the uncouth garb and manner of the man, bursts into a loud fit of laughter; when Merlin, in displeasure breaks off one of the stag's horns, and throws it at the scoffer, whom he kills on the spot, and then quietly returns to the forest. But he is pursued by the bridal company, is overtaken, bound, and again carried to the court of Rhydderch. Again he becomes sullen and melancholy, when orders are given that he may be allowed to wander through the city. Twice is he seen to laugh; — once when the porter, as he passed by the palace gate, asked for alms; next, on seeing a countryman earnestly bargain for a pair of shoes. As before, he will not explain the cause of his mirth unless the king promise to dismiss him to his old haunts in the forest. He then asserts, that the alms-begging porter had a large quantity of gold hidden in the earth, below the very place where he was standing; and that the countryman who bargained so earnestly for the shoes would never live to wear them, but would be drowned that very day.\*

\* See page 72. of the present volume.

Before his return, however, his sister tells him that nothing can be more dangerous than to face the biting frosts of winter in his solitude, and prevails on him to consent that a house shall be built for him. From one extreme he runs into another. He will have not only a house, but an observatory with sixty doors, sixty windows, and as many secretaries to write down his observations. Here he remains some years, being frequently visited by his sister Gwenddyd. On one occasion he tells her to return home, for her husband is dying; and expresses a wish that Taliessin, who had just finished his studies under the learned Gildas in Armorica, may be sent to him. Great is the joy of the two sages at meeting; and learned, we may be sure, were their conversations. With one of them we are favoured; it contains a new system of the universe — a system which no philosopher before or since could ever have divined. It tells us that the firmament is round, and hollow like a nut-shell; that the highest part is occupied by the ætherial heaven, the abode of the angels; that the next below is the aerial heaven, inhabited by inferior angels, who carry upwards the prayers of mankind; that our own atmosphere is inhabited by caco-demons, our worst enemies.\* Equally edifying is the description of the sea; one part passes round hell, and is of necessity hot; another borders on the poles, and is intolerably cold; but then both produce curious gems, sands, and fishes, on whose properties Taliessin delightfully expatiates. Nor are the islands less wonderful. The “Fortunate Island,” or “Island of Apples,” is governed by nine fair sisters, the eldest of whom, Morgan, is deeply skilled in medicine and magic. To this island, we are informed, the wounded Arthur was taken after the battle of Camblan; and the pilot was Barinth, who had a perfect knowledge of all the stars of heaven, and all the seas of the earth. By Morgan, Arthur and his companions were honourably received; the fairy laid him on her

\* See page 68. of the present volume.



own bed, and after inspecting his wounds, pronounced that a cure was possible, provided the king were left in her care. Of course the others returned, and Arthur was left with the fairy, where, no doubt, he yet lives, and will live for ages. The poem next acquaints us with the discovery of a wonderful fountain, by drinking from which Merlin was finally restored to his senses. He, Taliessin, and his widowed sister Gwenddyd, resolve to pass the remainder of their days together in seclusion from the world, in acts of charity and devotion; and in the end Gwenddyd, like her brother and his friend, acquire the prophetic gift—a proof, we suppose, that she had in reality repented of her peccadillos. What portion of this poem is of Geoffrey's invention, we shall not stop to enquire, as the observations on the Chronicle will equally apply to the poem. We shall only add, that writers prior to him allude to many of his traditions. Both are curious productions; and, as we have before observed, some knowledge of them is indispensable towards an understanding of European works of chivalry, especially of our own ancient romances and poems. Without this knowledge the poets of Elizabeth's age even of the Stuarts, are often unintelligible; without it Shakspeare, and Spenser, and Milton must often be thrown aside in despair.\*

1146      Of our other Latin historians, one only we shall  
to      notice here; not so much because he is an historian,  
1220.      as because he is a miscellaneous writer of some interest, the greatest ornament, beyond doubt, of our Latin literature during these ages. *Giraldus de Barri*, or, as he is more usually called, *Giraldus Cambrensis*, was born about 1146, in the castle of Manorbier, in Pembrokeshire. His descent was noble, even royal; for his mother Angharad was grand-daughter of Rhys ap Theodor, prince of South Wales. From his infancy he appears to have been equally devoted to literature

\* *Vita Merlini*, passim. As we have not access to this poem, which we believe has never been published, we have availed ourselves of the abstract by Ellis (*Specimens*, vol. i. section 4.), which we have still further condensed.

and religion; and the propensity was recognised by his uncle David Fitzgerald, bishop of St. David's, who undertook the care of his education. He next studied with considerable credit at the university of Paris; and on his return, in 1172, he embraced holy orders, and soon attained the dignity of archdeacon, and was appointed legate of the archbishop of Canterbury, for the reformation of clerical discipline in Wales. In his conduct as an ecclesiastic, Giraldus had all the spirit of his age,—attentive to his duties, a rigid exacter of tithes, and not hesitating to excommunicate even the powerful, when they presumed to lay hands on the substance or to withhold the rights of the church. Thus, when the governor of Pembrokeshire, and the royal constable, drove away from the priory of Pembroke eight yoke of oxen, he placed that baron under the ban of the church. With equal zeal did he suspend or depose the married ecclesiastics; and soon obtained a high name for ability, courage, and conscientiousness. In fact, he was regarded as the future primate of Wales,—for that the see of St. David's disputed the honour with the archbishops of Canterbury, is well known. But formidable difficulties lay in the path of his ambition. Though on the death of his uncle he was elected the successor, and though the election was approved by the primate of England, Henry Plantagenet refused to ratify it. For this refusal, the king had plausible reasons. The Welsh had never been fully subdued; they were the unwilling tributaries of the English crown; and he dreaded lest a person of such influence, alike by talents and birth, should, when acknowledged as the head of the Welsh church, favour the aspirations of the people after their ancient independence. The archdeacon gave way, but with reluctance enough, and passed the next few years at Paris, in the study of the canon law and literature. On his return, after administering for a short period the affairs of the diocese of St. Davids during the absence of the bishop, he accepted the royal invitation to court. There he

passed a considerable time, assiduously enough to win the king's favour ; but he could obtain no preferment, notwithstanding the hopes held out by the monarch, to whom promises cost nothing. Yet he was treated with high distinction : he was employed in several important missions ; and was appointed preceptor to prince John, whom he accompanied to Ireland. There he made collections for two important works, the *Topographia* and *Expugnatio Hibernica*, or the Description and Conquest of Ireland. The account which he gives of the "barbarous people," has no doubt been offensive to their descendants : certainly no consideration, not even the offer of the highest ecclesiastical dignities, could induce him to settle in that country. On his return to England, he proceeded to Oxford, where, during three successive days, he read a chapter of his *Topographia*, — on the first, to the inhabitants ; on the second, to the doctors and professors ; on the third, to the remaining scholars and the civic officers. His work would be agreeable, for two reasons. In the first place, the subject was new, and in his hands most interesting. In the second, each recitation was followed by a sumptuous festival, than which, he assures us, nothing had ever been more splendid. From this peaceful scene, he was hurried, in 1188, to accompany archbishop Baldwin in a tour through Wales. The preceding year Henry and many of his nobles had assumed the cross ; the eloquence of St. Bernard\* had stimulated other patrons to the same object ; and to fill the Welsh with the same enthusiasm, the venerable primate, accompanied by Glanville, the chief justiciary, by many nobles, knights, and clergy, and an ample retinue, penetrated into that region. They were met by Rhys ap Griffith and other chieftains, who equally assumed the sacred symbol ; and Giraldus himself, with the bishop of St. Davids and other Welsh dignitaries, were no less eager to enrol themselves under the consecrated banner. This extraordinary mission has given rise to one of our author's best works,— his *Itinerarium Cam-*

\* See Vol. II. p. 288.]

*bricæ*. With such vehemence did he preach the obligation of rescuing the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidels, that hundreds eagerly enlisted. At Haverford the shedding of tears was incessant, — yet, reader, our archdeacon did not understand Welsh: the effect of his discourse consequently might fitly be compared with that of St. Bernard, who made the rough old Germans shed tears, though not one of them understood a word of his language; and Giraldus prides himself on the comparison. Moreover, a Welshman, probably as rough as any German, declared to prince Rhys, that had the archdeacon preached in the native tongue, not one of his personal attendants would have been able to resist the pathetic appeal. Nothing can exceed the complaisance with which Giraldus relates these and similar anecdotes. After king Henry's death, however, he obtained absolution from his vow, on the twofold plea of age and poverty\*; and so did many others; in fact, as such absolutions could be purchased for money, the practice became, in the following century at least, extremely profitable to the papal exchequer. The opening of Richard's reign was more smiling than that of Henry's: when that monarch was departing for the Holy Land, he was appointed coadjutor to the bishop of Ely in the regency of the realm; and he was successively offered the bishoprics of Bangor and Llandaff. But he refused both; the bishop of St. Davids was old and infirm; and he had strong hopes of succeeding to that object of so many years' wishes. To prepare himself for the dignity, he left the court for Lincoln, where he studied theology during six years with great ardour. To do him justice, the love of letters, whatever was his ambition, was predominant within him: this made him leave the court without regret. In 1199, the aged bishop died, and the chapter elected our archdeacon. Hubert, however, who now filled the see of Canterbury, refused to accept the nomination, on the

\* The former was *but* a plea; for Giraldus was in the vigour of manhood. The latter seems to have been equally so.

same grounds as had been urged by Henry II. ; and when the chapter persisted, the affair was carried before Richard, then in Normandy. But that monarch died before a decision could be given ; and king John was persuaded to oppose him. He now clearly perceived that nothing was to be gained by royal favour ; and a court became more disagreeable than before. He had, indeed, been taught wisdom by his past experience ; and he no longer desired to pursue a phantom which mocked him at every step. In a letter to the primate, he well describes his feelings on the occasion : —

“ Deeply have I to lament the sacrifice of so much time to ambition and to perdition. Allow me therefore to retire, and employ my remaining days in books and writing. Let others, if they please, frequent the court, as I, labouring under the same delusion, have done ; a useless follower have I been of it. Having experienced enough, and more than enough, the whims and vexations of the great, henceforth, with respect to them, I desire to be as if I were not. May the merciful God, our Father, grant that, far from the cares and pursuits of a court, which always wound, but never satisfy or heal the heart ; far also from the tumults of men, I may pass my remaining days in the tranquillity of retirement, while bewailing and redeeming my grievous loss of time ! ”

But though he was sick of a court, he did not put into practice his philosophical design. He hastened to St. Davids ; the chapter still insisted on electing him ; and, to support their rights and his own, he proceeded to Rome, to plead his cause in person before Innocent III. The suit was a tedious one ; he had not money enough to bribe ; and in five years, after three expensive journeys to that capital of corruption, his election was declared null. Long, however, did the canons of St. Davids stoutly and patriotically defend their right ; but, in the end, royal, archiepiscopal, and papal authority triumphed. His opposition rendered him naturally obnoxious to the English court. At length he gave way : he felt that his resistance was only depriving the church of a pastor ; nor could he avoid asserting that the church itself was become too corrupt to afford much prospect of its re-

generation. He even resigned his archdeaconry in favour of a nephew ; yet he had still preferment enough for the humble life he had resolved to embrace ; for he held two livings in Pembrokeshire, one in Oxfordshire, and a prebendal stall in the cathedral of Hereford. The last seventeen years of his life he passed<sup>d</sup> in retirement and study ; in the revision of some works and the composition of others ; making to society ample amends for his former unprofitableness ; laying up for himself a fame that posterity will never suffer to die ; and anxious, above all, to prepare for his happy departure. He died in his seventy-fourth year ; and his tomb is yet to be seen in the cathedral of St. Davids.\*

The works of Giraldus are far too numerous and miscellaneous to be noticed here. They are chiefly comprised in the two works we have mentioned on Ireland, in two on Wales, in the lives of many saints and churchmen, in dogmatic and moral treatises, and in a few epistles and sermons. In all his writings he exhibits a considerable acquaintance with history, sacred and profane, and with the classic models of antiquity ; and all are remarkable for considerable elegance no less than liveliness of manner. Of these his two works on Ireland are by far the most curious ; but as Ireland is not included in the plan of this compendium, we shall reluctantly pass them over, and direct the reader's attention to the two on Wales. The *Itinerarium Cambriae* is, as we have before observed, the progress of archbishop Baldwin through Wales, for the purpose of preaching the cross. The primate and his noble company entered the principality by the borders of Herefordshire, and proceeded into the county of Radnor. It is curious to contemplate the perverse success of these cross-preachers ; with what eagerness many flocked to assume the obligation of wresting the holy places from the misbelievers, and con-

\* Giraldus Cambrensis, de Rebus à se Gestis, lib. i. ii. iii. (apud Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, tom. ii. p. 457—513.). Idem, de Jure et Statu Menevensis Ecclesiae, passim (apud eundem, p. 516, &c.). Sir Richard Colt Hoare, *Life of Giraldus de Barri*, p. xi—xlix.

sequently of bidding adieu to their nearest kindred and most imperative duties. In this prevailing folly, however, the women were much wiser or much less distracted than the men. When unable to prevent the assumption of the cross by a brother, a son, or a husband, their loud lamentations often betrayed what our archdeacon would call their want of religious fervour. In many cases, however, their efforts over their *husbands* were successful. Thus the wife of prince Rhys, "by her womanish artifices, diverted him from his noble purpose," for which she has not much praise from Giraldus. Before quitting Radnor, he considerably acquaints us with some notable legends, which, though evidence of the credulity, are also characteristic of the time. Thus he relates how a man, "in these our days," had shot a fair doe with horns of twelve years' growth, and had immediately lost the use of his eyes. This event, however, is scarcely so wonderful as one which happened just before the death of Henry II.: the fish of a certain pool fought so furiously with each other, both in the water and out of it, that the following morning scarcely one remained alive.—Crossing the river Wye, the crusaders proceeded towards Brecknock. At Lhanvaes he tells us of a boy who, venturing to take a pigeon's nest in the church of that place, incurred the miraculous vengeance of the patron saint, by adhering so firmly to the stone, that it required three days' solemn supplication at the altar before he was released. And this anecdote leads him to relate another. A poor woman, very devout in appearance, constantly visited the shrine of a saint; but her object was neither more nor less than to plunder it. By a curious kind of theft, she licked up from the altar the small bits of gold and silver which had been offered there; but she was not long suffered to do this with impunity: one day her tongue and lips adhered so to the altar, that she could not move, and was of course instantly detected; but in a few hours the saint was appeased. In another place we have an account of the patriarch's horn, which if any one blew,

woe be to him ; but safely might the wider end be placed to the ear ; and when it was, delightful was the music heard within,—just like the gentle tones of the harp. Amidst these delectable legends, we are regaled with his thoughts on women, whom he declares ripe for every species of wickedness under heaven. Though their two great vices are lust and revenge, they far exceed men even in the rest ; and he supports this opinion both by scriptural and profane authority. Thus, in Ecclesiastes :—“ I have found one good man out of a thousand, but not one woman.” Thus Juvenal :—

“ Nihil est audacior illis  
Deprensis, viam atque animas à crimine sumant.”

Proceeding towards Abergavenny, and thence to Caerleon, the number of crusaders increased ; but from that place to Cardiff, we read of no great success. At Llandaff the holy work prospered ; so also at Abertame and Goer. But the legends are more interesting than the preaching.

“ A short time before our days, a circumstance worthy of notice occurred in these parts, which Elidorus, a priest, most strenuously affirmed had befallen himself. When a youth of twelve years,—since, as Solomon says, the root of learning is bitter, though the fruit be sweet,—following his literary studies, only to avoid the discipline and frequent stripes of his preceptor, he one day escaped and hid himself under the hollow bank of a river : and having continued there two days, until he was exhausted by hunger, two little men, no bigger than dwarfs, appeared to him and said,—‘ If thou wilt come with us, we will lead thee into a land filled with sports and pleasures.’ He consenting, arose and followed them through a dark subterraneous way, until they came to a fair country, adorned with rivers and meads, with woods and landscapes, yet somewhat dark, since it was not lighted by any sun. The days were just as if they were obscured with clouds ; the nights were very dark, through the absence of the moon and stars. The boy was taken before the king, to whom he was presented in full court : and the king, having looked on him for some time, to the wonder of all, delivered him to the care of the young prince, his son, a boy too. All the men were of very small stature, but well proportioned : their faces were handsome, and their



long hair fell over their shoulders like that of women. Their horses were about the size of greyhounds. Their food was neither flesh nor fish, but a milky diet made up into certain messes as if cooked with saffron. Never did they swear. Nothing did they so much detest as lies. Whenever they returned from these upper regions, they condemned our ambition, faithlessness, and fickleness. They had no visible religion: the only thing which they appeared to worship and revere was truth. The boy frequently returned to our hemisphere, generally by the way he had gone, sometimes by another; at first in company with others, but afterwards alone. To his mother only did he communicate what he had seen,—the description of the country, the nature and condition of the people. Being charged by her to bring her a present of the gold with which that region abounded; one day, while at play with the king's son, he stole the golden ball, and by the usual path hastened to his mother. And when' he came to the threshold of the house, and, as he was pursued by the people, was eager to enter, he stumbled, and falling at the room where his mother was sitting, two of the chiefs seized the ball which he had dropped from his hands, and surveying him with every species of contempt and derision, departed."

In vain did the boy, filled with sorrow for his folly, endeavour to retrace his steps to the subterranean world: no path was to be found, though he passed near twelve months in the search. The Bishop of St. David's, the uncle of Giraldus, had frequently conversed with the favoured mortal, then an old man, who remembered much of the language used below. All that the bishop could say about it was, that it was very like Greek. — At Haverford, where the archdeacon preached so forcibly in Latin and French to the admiring world, he tells us one or two, not legends, but anecdotes, strongly illustrative of the barbarism of the times. A famous robber, confined in one of the dungeons of Haverford castle, was sometimes visited by three boys, — one the son of lord Clare, the other two being the son and grandson of the lord of the castle, — for whom he made arrows. One day he fastened the door of his dungeon—the youths being with him—and seizing a battle-axe, protested to the terrified domestics outside, that he would instantly murder all the three, unless his

life and liberty were guaranteed. His object was gained. — The lord of another castle had long maintained a man whose eyes he had put out. The latter, however, perfectly remembered the difficult staircases and passages of the fortress, and could easily pass from one part to another. One day he seized the only son and heir of the baron, and, fastening all the doors behind him, ascended to the top of a high tower. The father and the domestics hastened to the foot of the tower, and any ransom was offered for the youth's life. The man sturdily refused, and declared, that unless the father inflicted on himself the punishment which had been laid on him, viz. the mutilation of the lower members, the boy should instantly be precipitated from the summit. Seeing that other terms could not be procured, the baron pretended to comply with the condition, and both he and his domestics raised a loud cry, as if the mutilation had really taken place. "Where is your pain?" demanded the man. "In my loins," was the reply. — "You are deceiving me!" cried the man, who prepared to put his threat into execution. A second time the baron permitted himself to be struck with a heavy blow; and, on being asked where he felt the greatest pain, replied, — "In the heart!" The blind man again cried out that it was false, and again was preparing to consummate his threat; when the unhappy father, to save his beloved son, really suffered the mutilation. To the third demand, — "Where now is your chief pain?" he replied, — "In my teeth!" — "That is true!" said the man: "experience only could enable you to speak thus! I shall now die with the greater satisfaction, as thou canst neither beget another son, nor receive comfort from this!" In an instant he sprang with the youth from the battlements of the tower. — Another relation, somewhat more legendary, may amuse. Speaking of the Flemings, who, for the sake of their manufactures, had been settled by Henry I. in South Wales, he says: —

"It is worthy of remark, that these people, from the shoulder bones of rams which have been stripped of the flesh by boiling

(not by roasting), can either foretell future events, or relate what has happened long ago, and has remained unknown. In our time, a man of some rank in these parts, named Mangonel, excelling all other men in knowledge of this art, had a wife pregnant by his own nephew. Suspicious of the fact, he caused a tup from his own flock to be sent her, as if it were a present from a neighbour. It was given to the cook, and at dinner the husband presented the shoulder bone, properly cleaned, to his wife, who was as well versed in the art as himself. Having examined the lines and secret marks a short time, she smiled, and threw it down on the table. He, concealing his knowledge of the matter, urged her to tell him the cause of her smiling; and at length, overcome by his entreaties, she replied, — ‘The man from whose fold this ram has been taken, has an adulterous wife, pregnant at this very moment through an incestuous commerce with his nephew.’ Sorrowful and dejected, the husband observed, — ‘Thou hast delivered a true oracle; and I grieve the more, as the shame of it falls on myself!’ The woman thus detected, unable to dissemble her confusion, betrayed by outward signs her inward feelings; displaying her shame and sorrow by blushing, by paleness, and, lastly, as women always do, by tears.”

It is strange that this farce of divination should be common in the mountains of Northern India, of Greece, and of the Scottish Highlands. If Giraldus be any authority on the subject, it was unknown to the Welsh prior to the introduction of the Flemings.

“In this part of Pembrokeshire, unclean spirits have conversed, not visibly, but sensibly, with mankind; first in the house of one Stephen, and afterwards in that of one William; and they showed their presence by throwing dirt, more in mockery, than in the view of injury. In the house of William, they cut holes in the linen and woollen garments; not without loss to the owner of the house, and to his guests. In that of Stephen, the spirit, in a manner more wonderful, used to converse with men; upbraiding them openly with every wicked thing they had done from their infancy, unwilling as they were that such things should be known or heard by others. . . . About the same time, in the same province of Pembroke, there bodily appeared, in the house of Elidor de Stackpole, a certain being like a red-haired young man, who called himself Simon. Taking the keys by force from the person intrusted with them, he impudently entered on the steward’s office: in appearance, he managed it so well, that

every thing prospered under his care, and there was no want of any thing in the house. Whatever the master and mistress merely designed, or had secretly intended, for the table and other daily uses, that, though unbidden and unwarned, he prepared with wonderful expedition. He knew where their treasures and other valuables were deposited; and, whenever they appeared avaricious, or too parsimonious, he would say, 'Why do you fear to touch such a heap of gold and silver, considering how few the days allowed you here below, and that the money which you thus hoard will soon be of no use to you?' For the hired labourers and servants of the house he provided superior food and drinking, saying, that liberality ought surely to be shown to those by whose labours the abundance was acquired. Whatever he wished to be done, though it might displease the master and the lady (all whose thoughts, as we have before observed, he knew), he completed with his usual diligence, and without so much as consulting them. Never did he enter a church; never utter one catholic word: never did he sleep in the house at night; yet, every morning, he was ready at his post. Being at length watched by one of the household, he was observed to take his stand between the windmill and a marsh, and hold a conversation with something. The next morning, being called before the master, he was made to deliver up the keys, which he had possessed about forty days. Being interrogated, at his departure, who he was, he replied, that he was begotten on the wife of a rustic in that parish, by an incubus in the shape of her husband; at the same time naming the man, his reputed father, who was dead, and his mother, who was still alive. And the woman, being earnestly pressed on the subject, confessed that the account was true."\*

The second book opens with an account of the see and city of St. David's, where the crusaders were now arrived. To those who are investigating the antiquities of our cathedral churches, and of the principality generally, no guide can be so valuable as Giraldus; for where he drops his legends, none can be more rational, and none so well informed. If absence of research had not long characterised our literature, beyond that of any other country, it would be surprising to see what errors have been committed by pretended antiquaries.—From St. David's, the crusaders continued their route to Cardigan.

\* Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Cambriæ*, lib. i. cap. 1—12.

from Cardigan they diverged inwards to Lampeder; and from Lampeder, proceeding northwards, they crossed the Devi (Dovy) and entered North Wales. The description alike of the scenery and the people is very interesting. The path was often rugged enough, or rather, there was no path at all. On their journey towards Carnarvon, they passed through a valley so precipitous, that they were obliged to dismount and travel on foot, to the evident discomfort of archbishop Baldwin. After much and breathless fatigue, he reached the opposite end, and sitting down on the trunk of an oak which had been uprooted by a storm, and looking on his followers, enquired with great good humour,—"Who among you can delight our weary ears by whistling?" In this question the grave dignitary did not merely regard the *music*; he was also willing to see which of his followers had the longest wind,—“For men out of breath,” says Giraldus, with much sageness, “cannot very well whistle.” It appears, however, that the lungs of no one were to be put to such a test; for suddenly a bird in the wood raised its dulcet whistle. After a short description of the woodpecker and aureolus, some one remarked that the nightingale never visited those parts, and the observation enabled the prelate to be facetious. “No, no! the nightingale is wiser than we! it takes care not to approach a country which we have been so foolish as to traverse!”—After a short stay at Bangor, the missionaries passed over the straits to the isle of Mona, or Anglesey, where, from an eminence near the shore, the archbishop addressed the assembled multitudes who had hastened from all parts of the island to meet them. To this day the spot is called the Rock of the Archbishop. Many were persuaded to take the cross; but eloquence was lost on prince Roderic and his followers,—an impiety for which Giraldus is sure to provide a punishment; and this he might easily do in so lawless a period, when brother was armed against brother, and son against father; when the most disastrous vicissitudes were of daily occurrence. But we

lose all interest in the object of the mission, amidst the graphic descriptions and strange legends of the writer. He tells us of a stone in the parish of Llanedan, shaped exactly like a human thigh, "and possessing innate virtues, that, carry it wherever you may, the following night it returns of its own accord, as the inhabitants have often experienced." Hugh earl of Chester, in the reign of the first Henry, who invaded Anglesey, disbelieved the popular tradition. To expose its folly, he caused it to be fastened with iron chains to another stone much larger in bulk, and both to be thrown into the sea: yet the very next morning it was found in its original position in the same churchyard.—Proceeding to the river Conway, near which was the Dinas Emrys, or promontory of Ambrosius (Merlin), whence Merlin uttered his prophecies, while Vortigern was seated near, we may observe that this is the very promontory on which Vortigern endeavoured to build a fortress, but that the stones were supernaturally removed every night.\* But we must leave this entertaining itinerary; observing, that the crusaders proceeded through Flintshire; crossed the Dee to Chester; and thence, by Ludlow, Leominster, Wenloch, to Hereford, where the mission ended. They had, in fact, made the whole circuit of Wales, but seen little of the interior. This is to be regretted; for had Giraldus, with the same credulity, yet occasional archness of relation, the same simplicity, yet fidelity of description, passed through those almost inaccessible regions he would have produced a book wholly unrivalled.†

Before we dismiss Giraldus, however, we will, for a moment, direct the reader's attention to his *Descriptio Cambriæ*, or Description of Wales. Omitting that which applies to the country, which is foreign to our purpose, we have some curious remarks respecting the inhabitants. There was not a beggar among them; for this reason,

\* See page 63. of the present volume.

† Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Cambriæ*, lib. ii. cap. 1—13. Sir Richard Colt Hoare has made this work more popular by his elegant publication. His notes are very interesting; but unfortunately, he has often mistaken the sense of his original.

— the houses were open to every body. No traveller whether stranger or native, had need to solicit hospitality: he had only to surrender his arms, and he became an inmate so long as he chose to remain. The conversation of the young women, and their music on the harp, made the day pass agreeably enough. Here, he tells us, was no jealousy; which was as rare in Wales, as it was common in Ireland. The dishes were substantial; no luxuries, no conveniences even: there were no tables, consequently no cloths and napkins; but the dishes were placed on mats laid on the floor. So far was hospitality carried, that the host and hostess remained standing until all the guests were satisfied; that if there were any deficiency, it might fall on them alone. They slept in the same room in which they feasted: rushes being for this purpose spread on the floor, and covered with a cloth. On this heap all lay down together, without undressing. During the whole night the fire blazed in the chimney, — a great comfort, we are assured, to one side of the sleepers, for the other was somewhat apt to be cold. The bed, however, was not exactly one of down; for the sleepers, when one side was sore, could arise, sit by the fire until the painful feeling had left them, and then return to their hard couch. They cut their hair close, shaved, and paid great attention to their teeth, which were always like ivory. Their intellect was sharp, and they were apt at learning. The harp, singing, and poetry, were held in unrivalled esteem among them: in these accomplishments, many made some proficiency; but they were carried to perfection by the bards, who were consequently a most honourable class. The person of the bard was sacred; advancing to battle, he preceded the army, playing the national airs; during a peace, his was one of the most honoured places in the hall. There were three descriptions of bards: the poets, who invented both the words and the tune; the players only, who were no poets; the singers, who neither composed nor played, but accompanied their voices to the music of the player. They formed a distinct

order, and were regulated by statutes of royal enactment. The wit and cheerfulness of the inhabitants were famous ; and when any one uttered a good saying, it was sure to be widely diffused. Their independence of manner was conspicuous in the bold yet respectful tone they used even to their princes. Their attachment to birth was extreme : they would marry into a poor, never into a mean, family, however rich ; and they revenged with fearful cruelty any contamination of their blood. Of their devotion, several proofs are given. They craved the blessing of every priest or monk they met ; they did many things *in trios* in honour of the Trinity ; they paid tithes with great readiness ; and when they ate, the first slice of bread was always given to the poor. " In short," Giraldus concludes his first book, " happy would this nation be, if it had good prelates and pastors, and but one king, — *if he were a good one!*" In the second book, however, he gives us the contrast to this fine picture. He describes them as light in mind as they were in body ; not only inconstant, but faithless. Many lived by open plunder ; all were ready to take advantage of an enemy under the most base and dishonourable circumstances. He defends them from the charge of cowardice brought by Gildas ; but he allows that they often turned their backs in battle : that, in the first onset, they were more than men ; in the second, they were less than women. No other nation, he assures us, is so prone to internal usurpations : brothers could not agree, because, as their interests clashed, they were always at war : a vassal would soon swear that his land was allodial ; all were ready to extend their own boundaries at the expense of their neighbours. Again, the powerful were always rapacious ; the people indulged to excess in eating and drinking ; incest, among low as well as high, was common : " they do not marry until, by previous cohabitation, they have tried the disposition, and above all, the fecundity, of the women they wish for wives." — " There is," he adds, " an ancient custom of men taking young girls on trial, engaging, if they do not marry their mistresses, to allow



a certain pecuniary compensation, for loss of chastity, to the parents." Religion was much on the same level with chastity: the sons of clergymen regularly succeeded to the church of their parents; and, if the bishop dared to institute any other than a son, the people combined to resist the odious tyranny. He adds a few other sins which we have not space to detail, but which, in the aggregate, certainly do honour to the labours of his Satanic majesty. Beyond doubt, they confirm the deplorable account given of the Britons by Gildas\*; for Giraldus acknowledges, that such as they were, such they had always been. In truth, as the archdeacon clearly perceived, the best thing that could possibly happen to the nation would be its entire conquest by the Normans, and its incorporation with England; and to forward so desirable an event, he gives minute directions both for its reduction and government.†

Omitting other miscellaneous writers, there were some Latin poets who attained some celebrity in their day. Thus, Robert of Dunstable, a monk of St. Alban's, wrote two books on the life of the British protomartyr, which are praised by Warton. A similar judgment has been passed on Henry of Huntingdon and John of Salisbury. Whatever may have been the poetical merit of the latter, his Polycraticon, or treatise *De Nugis Curialium*, exhibits both extensive reading and considerable taste. It consists of eight books on a variety of subjects, not the least interesting of which are those relating to courts and courtiers; which and whom this bishop of Chartres, — promoted to that see as much for his merit, as because he had been the chaplain and friend of Thomas à Becket, — holds in perfect abomination. Of a superior character, as a poet, was Hanwill, a monk of St. Alban's (1190), whose poem, in nine books, contains some good verses, — turgid, indeed, but often imaginative. The same favourable judgment may be passed on Neckham, abbot of Cirencester (1217), who has also

\* See Vol. III. p. 4.

† Giraldus Cambrensis, *Descriptio Cambriae*, lib. i. et ii. passim.

written on many other subjects than poetry; of his works, more MSS. remain, than of almost any other writer of the age. Unfortunately, most of our ancient literary stores are mouldering in the dust of libraries, never consulted even by antiquaries; never published, nor likely to be so. Whether the public, or the publishers, or literary men by profession, are to be blamed for this disgraceful apathy, we shall not stop to enquire: one thing, however, is certain, — that whoever devotes his life to such researches — and less than a whole life would be insufficient — must do so, not only without hope of reward, but in the conviction that his toilsome labours will never see the light, — that no bookseller would publish, that few readers would purchase them. This state of things, lamentable as it is, must continue, so long as periodicals, whether political or literary, constitute the only reading of the public.—In the greatest of his poems, *De Laude Divinæ Sapientiæ* Neckham not only reverts to his juvenile years with a fondness natural to man, but he praises, probably with great justice, the studious spirit displayed in the monastery of St. Alban's, to which he was indebted for his education.

“ *Clastrum*

*Martyris Albani, sit tibi tuta quies !  
 Hic locus ætatis nostræ primordia novit  
 Annos felices, lætitiæque dies !  
 Hic locus ingenuis pueriles imbuit annos  
 Artibus, et nostræ laudis origo fuit.  
 Hic locus insignes magnosque creavit alumnos,  
 Felix eximio martyre, gente, situ.  
 Militat hic Christo, noctuque dieque labori  
 Indulget sancto religiosa cohors.”*

Walter Mapes, archdeacon of Oxford, has been styled the Anacreon of his age. From the specimen preserved in Camden's Remains,—the only one we have seen,—he appears to have been sufficiently jovial, even licentious. A far higher name than any of the preceding was Joseph Iscanus, or Joseph of Exeter, the author of two epic poems: the first, on the Trojan war, is chiefly founded

on Dares Phrygius ; the second, on the war of Antioch, is taken from the relations of the crusaders ; but a small fragment only remains of it. But we must refrain from a barren nomenclature, since, in the present work, we have neither the limits nor the opportunity of illustrating the authors by appropriate extracts. We may add, that into the vast field of miscellaneous Latin literature, still less into that of dogmatic or ascetic theology, we cannot enter at all ; and we doubt whether any one would thank us, if we did. By this observation, we do not mean to cast a censure on the writers themselves, so much as on the spirit of the present age. During the last two centuries, nothing has been so fashionable as to rail at the ignorance of what we call the dark and barbarous ages. In many respects, they were, doubtless, much behind the present generation ; they knew little of the physical or mathematical sciences, and nothing whatever of those which depend on successive practical experiments ; but in some others they have not been surpassed, even in these proud days. From the vast range of European literature during the middle ages, it would not be difficult to select works which, for *invention*, might confer honour on the noblest of our poets ; and which, for profundity of thought, and acuteness of reasoning, have not since been equalled by the most celebrated of our philosophers. Equally fashionable, too, has it been to decry the indolence, no less than the ignorance, of the monks. The fact, however, is, that their literary labour was often astonishing ; that it would put to shame much of our self-complaisance. The learning of the age was to be found almost exclusively in the cloister. Every monastery, which had the means, maintained an apartment called the *scriptorium*, where books were transcribed or composed : the scriptorium was often endowed with a liberality which might possibly create surprise in writers who have, so much to their own satisfaction, ridiculed the whole institute. Thus, to that of St. Edmondsbury was assigned the profits of two mills ; to that of Ely, two churches ; to that of St. Swithin at Winchester, the tithes of a

valuable rectory. This, be it remembered, was for *hireling* writers ; for the monks themselves, who could possess no *peculium*, however numerous their writings, could neither receive nor expect any remuneration whatever. Yet both from our printed and manuscript remains, — the latter in incredible abundance — we have proof enough, that not only the monks, but the abbots, attained distinction in letters. The truth is, that these calumniated communities did more for literature than any ecclesiastical body of the present day. Where is the cathedral chapter, where even the college, that either expends so much money, or exhibits so much ardour, for the multiplication of books ? The shelves of the former exhibit little of increase ; and it may be doubted whether even those of our universities would show any great accession, if all new works were not gratuitously supplied them ; if, by act of parliament, publishers and authors were not oppressed, to increase a store already too large.\*

In estimating the literary spirit of these ages, we are apt to overlook the exceeding paucity of books. Men could not then, as now, resort to well-furnished shelves ; they had not abstracts or condensations of works prepared for them by professional reviewers. Their study was one of toil ; books were beyond the reach of all but the rich, or of religious communities ; and they were often so few in number, that we may wonder, and justly wonder, how with so few auxiliaries, writers could so fluently quote, not only the models of antiquity, but the best productions of the middle ages. If transcription could easily be procured, parchments could not. We smile at perceiving a few volumes dignified with the pompous name of library. That of John de Pontissara,

\* Leland, *Scriptores Britannici*, passim. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, *Præfatio ad Partem ii.* Johannes Salisburiensis, *Polycraticon* (in *Supplemento ad Bibliothecam Patrum*, p. 340, &c.). Cauden, *Remains*, p. 436. 410, &c. Ducange *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediæ et Inf. Latinitatis*, v. *Scriptorium*. Dugdalc, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, tom. i. et ii. passim. Matthæus Parisiensis, *Historia*, p. 1003. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. Introduction.

bishop of Winchester, in the thirteenth century, consisted of seventeen only. But then he borrowed from the communities. Thus, from the monastery of St. Swithin, he borrowed "*Biblia bene Glossata*," in two folio volumes; and the value set upon it appears from a bond which he was compelled to give for its safe return. That very Bible had been bequeathed to the community by his predecessor; and it, with the accompanying bequest of 100 marks, was thought valuable enough to found a chantry for the repose of his soul. Fearful were the curses—and ecclesiastics have always been hearty cursers—passed on all who should presume to alienate a book from any monastic library. Every year, the prior and convent of Rochester pronounced excommunication against any one who, during the following year, should conceal or injure the *Physics* of Aristotle. A book was often bequeathed with this condition,—that the receiver should pray for the soul of the donor; and that, on the death of the former, it should either revert to the family of the original owner, or pass to some other person. It was often entailed with as much solemnity as the most valuable estate. Thus, at the commencement of a breviary of the Bible, there is a memorial by the donor:—"I, Philip, late bishop of Lincoln, give this book, called *Petrus de Aureolis*, to the new library about to be built in the church of Lincoln; reserving the use and possession of the said book to Richard Fryerby, clerk, canon and prebendary of Milton, to hold in fee, for the term of his natural life; and afterwards to revert to the said library, or its keepers for the time being, faithfully and without delay." The purchase of a book was often a matter of so much importance, that persons of consideration were assembled as witnesses on the occasion. Thus, an archdeacon of Leicester has written in Peter the Lombard's *Liber Sententiarum*,—"This Book of Sentences belongs to M. Rogers, archdeacon of Lincoln, who bought it from Geoffrey the chaplain, brother of Henry vicar of Northalvington, in presence of master Robert de Lee, of

master John de Liring, of Richard of Luda, clerk, of Richard the almoner, of the said vicar Henry and his clerk, and of many others. And the said archdeacon gave this book to God and St. Oswald, to the prior and convent of Barden." Books were of so much value, that they were often pledged to learned bodies; and when they were lent, a deposit was left on them. Thus Oxford had a chest for books thus pledged, which, if not redeemed by a given day, became the property of the university. After the invention of paper, indeed, they were multiplied in greater numbers; but still they remained beyond the means of ordinary individuals. The price was often enormous.—These facts, it may be said, imply a very low state of literature, yet such an inference would be at variance with truth. They prove, indeed, that laymen, unless very wealthy, must pass their lives without much intellectual relaxation; and we accordingly find very few lay names in our literary history; but the libraries of religious communities afforded a sufficient resource for learning. A multitude of books is not favourable to either imagination or close thinking, perhaps not even to erudition. Where they are few, they are not only carefully read, but pondered; not only swallowed, but digested. A thing is generally valued in proportion to its rarity; and it is possible that a multiplicity of volumes may, instead of exciting ardour, produce satiety. What, however, was deficient in one library might be supplied from the abundance of another. Nothing was so common as the loan of a book, except a journey—often a distant journey—to consult or transcribe one. Let the scarcity, however, have been what it may, one thing is undoubted,—that many of the monastic fraternity could boast of an erudition which would do honour to the present age. Often have we found, in the space of two or three pages, fifty or sixty different authorities cited. Thus, Roger Bacon, in one page, refers to Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, St. Isidore, St. Jerome, and others: in another to Averroes, Avicenna, St. Thomas Aquinas and other

commentators on or expounders of the great Stagyrite.\*

1066. 2. NORMAN AND VERNACULAR LITERATURE. —

When Norman kings sat on the throne, they naturally preferred both the language and the literature of their native country. Latin was to them unknown; and English was only spoken by the lower ranks of society. The Norman French was not merely the language of the court, it was that of every man of station. The minstrels and poets of that province were attracted to the courts of our kings; there was their best reward, and there the best compositions of the language originated. The remains of this period are absolutely innumerable. Normandy, indeed, and the adjoining provinces of Brittany, have been regarded as the cradle of romantic fiction. Nothing is more true than that our vernacular tales, whether in prose or verse, are translations from that language. It is now allowed by the most eminent of the French antiquarians, that the true patrons of their literature were the English monarchs; and that the noblest productions of their language originated in this country. Norman literature opens a boundless field for research. Hitherto, whatever discoveries have been made in it, must be awarded to the French; in this country little has been done to explore it. All our writers who have incidentally treated the subject, — Warton, Ritson, Ellis, Turner, and others, — have fulfilled their task in a manner so wretchedly superficial, that their labours are worse than useless. With the names of Gaimar, of Wace, of Benedict de St. Maur, of Marie de France, and others, they are fluent enough; but not one of them had ever perused a single page of these poets. Into that subject nobody will expect us to enter; it is, in fact, somewhat foreign to our design. We will, however, give one or two extracts from Robert Wace, one of the most celebrated of these poets. Ro-

\* Wood, *Historia Antiquit.* Univ. Oxon. tom. ii. p. 48. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. Dissertation 2. Baron, *Opus Majus*, p. 8, &c.

bert Wace was a native of Jersey, and born about the year 1124. He appears early to have attached himself to the court of his sovereign, the English monarch. In 1155, he finished his Romance (so called because it was written in the vulgar, or *Roman* tongue), of Brut (Brutus), which is chiefly founded on the Chronicle of the Welsh Geoffrey. This is a copious poem, more copious by far than the original Chronicle.\* It is, however, certain, as we have before intimated, that Wace had other authorities before him. The Norman was his native language; he was well acquainted with its literature; in fact, he had been educated in France; and in several passages he distinctly intimates his acquaintance with the Breton traditions. Five years afterwards he produced his *Roman de Rou*; which he had composed at the instance of our Henry II. This is the history of Rollo (*Rou*) first duke of Normandy, and his successors, down to the reign of Henry I. :—

“The *Roman de Rou*, is, beyond comparison, the most curious remnant now existing, both of the history and language of the Normans under the dominion of their dukes. That certain portions, only, of so valuable a remnant of antiquity, should hitherto have appeared in print, is the more surprising, when we consider that a multitude of authors †, of far inferior interest, have been carefully and repeatedly published. But perhaps the neglect in which the poem has so long lain may be chiefly owing to its language, which is little understood in this country, and, in no slight degree, to the superficial tone and aversion to research, so unhappily characteristic of the current literature of the day. For our own parts, we blush that, by the present publication (the *Roman de Rou*), Rouen has, at the expense of London, earned so noble a title to the gratitude of every man of letters. England is surely as much interested as France, if not in the language,

\* This poem, copies of which are probably in several of our libraries, has sadly puzzled the librarians and catalogue makers:—“*Poema hoc scriptum est*,” says Rud (Catalogue of MSS. in Durham Cathedral, p. 311.), “*sermone adeo vetusto et obsoleto, ut Gallus quidam, vir ingeniosus et doctus, cum hunc librum ostenderam, primo intuitu vix crederet Gallicum esse. Ea lingua est quam Romanensem (Roman) vocabant, quod fabularum Romanensium propria quodammodo esset.*” The librarian and the Frenchman merit some other epithets than *ingeniosi* or *docti*. This catalogue was published in 1825!

† A monstrous exaggeration.



at least in the subject, of the work ; a subject which embraces, among other important matters, one of the most momentous revolutions in our history,—the Norman invasion. The poem before us, which comprises above 16,000 verses, properly consists of three parts. The first, which is written in the octosyllabic measure, and which is merely an introduction to the chief subject, relates the irruption of the Scandinavians under Hastings, and his royal pupil, Biorn, into France and Italy. The second, in Alexandrine verses, contains the exploits of Rou, or Rollo, both in his own country\*, and in Normandy. The third exhibits the historic events of the hero's successors until A. D. 1106, the sixth year of the reign of our Henry I." †

Whoever expects to find *poetry* in the Roman de Rou will be grievously disappointed ; as well may he look into Sternhold and Hopkins, or into our veriest nursery rhymes. The interest of the work is derived, first from its language, and, in the second place, from its being impressed with the intellectual character of the times. Of that character one of the essential attributes was credulity ; and we accordingly perceive that Wace has his full portion of it. The following legend, relating to Richard the Good, duke of Normandy (996—1026), is a fair specimen of his manner : —

“ Par nuit errout come par jor  
 Unkes de rien ne out poor :  
 Maint fantosme vit e trova  
 Unkes de rien ne s'esfréa :  
 Pur nule riens ke il veist,  
 Ne nuit ne jor poor nel prist.  
 Pur ço k'il errout par nuit tant  
 Aloent ia gent de li disant ;  
 K'autresi cler par nuit veoit  
 Cum nul altre par jor faseit.  
 Custume aveit quant il errout,  
 A chescun mustier k'il trovout,  
 Se il poeit, dedenz entrout ;  
 Se il ne poeit, de fors orout.  
 Une nuit vint à un mustier,  
 Orer voleit e Dex prier ;  
 Luing de sa gent alont pensant,  
 Ariere alouent et avant.

\* Scandinavia.

† Foreign Quarterly Review, vol. ii. p. 90.

Sun cheva! areigna de fors ;  
 Dedenz trua en biere un curs :  
 Juste la biere avant passa,  
 Devant l'autel s'agenuilla ;  
 Sur un leitrum sis ganz jeta ;  
 Mez el partir les ublia.  
 Beisa la terre, si ura.  
 Unkes de rienz ne s'cfréa.  
 N'i aveit gaires demuré,  
 Ni gaires n'i aveit esté,  
 Kant al mustier oi ariere  
 Moveir li cors, cruistre la biere .  
 Turna sei pur li curs veir ; —  
 ' Gis tei ! ' dist-il, ' ne te moveir !  
 Se tu es bone u male chose,  
 Gis tei en paiz, si te repose !'  
 Dunc a li Quens s'urisun dite,  
 Ne sai se fu grant u petite.  
 Puiz dist, kant il seigna sun vis  
*Per hoc signum Sanctæ Crucis*  
*Libera me de malignis,*  
*Domine Deus salvis !*  
 Al retourner d' iluec dist tant :  
 ' Dex, en tes mains m' alme cumant !'  
 S'espée prist, si s'en turna,  
 E li deables, sei drescha :  
 Encuntre l'us fu en estant,  
 Bras estendus estut devant,  
 Cume s'il vousist Richart prendre,  
 E l'iessure de l'us desfendre.  
 E Richart a li brand sachié  
 Le bu li a parmi trenchié ;  
 A travers la biere l'abati  
 Ne sai s' il fist noise ne cri.  
 Al cheval ert Richart venu,  
 Del cemetiere ert fors iessu, ;  
 Kant de sis ganz li remembra ;  
 Nes vout laissier, si returna ;  
 El chancel vint, ses ganz reprist.  
 Maint hoem i a ja n'i venist  
 As iglises fist cumander,  
 E as marchiez dire e crier,  
 Ke mez n'i, ait cors sul guerp  
 De si ke kel en l' ait enfui."

\* Roman de Rou, tom. i. pp. 278—281.

*Duke Richard and the Ghost.*

“ By night wandered Richard, as well as by day, and was afraid of nothing ; many phantoms did he see, yet never one made him quail, — no, nothing terrified him, day or night. And because that he strolled so much by night, people said of him, that he could see as well in the dark as other men in the open light. This custom he had in his wanderings, when he came to any church or monastery, he would, if he might, enter to pray, and if he might not, he would pray outside. One night, as he was riding thoughtfully along, he passed by a church, and he wished to pray to God in it ; far was he from his people, some before, some behind him. His horse he tied outside. Within, he found a corpse on a bier, yet close to the bier he pressed, threw his gloves on a reading desk, and before the altar knelt, which gloves he forgot on coming away. The earth he kissed, while he prayed. Truly of nothing was he afraid. Not long had he been there, when behind him in the church, he heard the corpse move, the bier crack ; then turned he round to see the corpse ; ‘ Lie still,’ said he, ‘ and move not ! Be thou a good thing or a bad, rest thee in peace, I say !’ His prayer being said to heaven’s queen, — whether a long or short one, in troth I know not, — he said, signing his face with the cross, ‘ By this holy sign, deliver me from the evil ones, Lord God of Salvation !’ And on rising to return, he said, ‘ Lord, to thine hands I commend my soul !’ So, taking his sword, he turned round, but the devil was there ; stiff and high he stood, stretching out his long arms, as if he would seize the duke, and not let him go. Then Richard lifted his sword, and cut the figure down the middle, and sent it under the bier ; — whether it yelled or not, that know not I. So Richard left the church, and to his horse he came, when suddenly he remembered his gloves ; leave them he would not, so he returned to the church, and took them. — Few the men, I think, that would have entered the church a second time ! After this, he had the order given in the churches and the market places, that thenceforth no corpse should be left alone until it was buried.”

The preceding is wild enough : the next is much more so. We need not give the original.

*The Hunter and the Fair Spirit.\**

“ One day some huntsmen of duke Richard caught a stag, and having flayed it, one of them set out to return, by a forest

\* Roman de Rou, tom. i. p. 290.

path he well knew, to his master. Not far was he advanced into the wood, when what should he see but a very fair damsel, well clad and sprightly and winning. Coming up to her, he bade her good day, and she rose up to return his greeting: and seeing her stand still, he alighted from his horse, asked her who she was, and what she was doing alone in that wood. Quickly she answered that she was waiting for a man who had to pass that way. Then took he her by one of her arms, and offered his humble service to her. What more he said I cannot tell; but to make a long story short, he did with her what he would, nor did she say him nay. And when he was about to leave her, she suddenly caught hold of him — whether by the hands or feet that know not I, — and rising with him into the air, whisked him through the boughs and branches, leaving him at last perched on the top of a very high tree! And when he wished to speak to her, looking round for that purpose, — what could have become of her? — nowhere was she to be seen! never from that moment did he see or hear of her. At length the huntsmen passing that way with the dead stag, saw him perched on the tree; and much trouble had they to get him down.”

Wace was not the only man who translated the deeds of Arthur into the Anglo-Norman tongue. He was immediately followed by the priest, *Gaimar*, whose *Estorie des Engles* begins where his ends, bringing down the Brut to William Rufus. *Gaimar* professes to have written at the intreaty of dame Custance le Gentil; and he alludes to the number of books he had to consult in English, Romance, and Latin. But if these poems constituted the amusement of the court, the nobility, and the well-educated classes, the bulk of the population was incapable of enjoying them. Yet the people had the same thirst for entertainment; and though the minstrels, or versifiers of royalty, would not condescend to satisfy it, other men arose to supply the void. For some time the vernacular writers, whether in prose or rhyme, appear to have translated from the Norman. The subjects were consequently the same; and of them the most popular regarded the exploits of Arthur and his knights. When we consider the changes through which the legends relating to that renowned

hero had to pass, we need not wonder that they should be so amplified by invention. Their first change was from the British to the Latin; next, from the Latin (occasionally, too, from the British direct) into the Norman; lastly, from the Norman into the English. As no one contented himself with merely fulfilling the office of translator; as all professedly added to or altered the original according to other traditions,—oftener, no doubt, according to mere fancy,—we may naturally expect to find considerable variations between the earlier and the later romances. These variations are, in fact, so many, that each may be considered a distinct work; identical, indeed, as to subject, and generally as to the more important events, but differing widely as to the minor ones, as to the order in which both were placed, as to the circumstances of the narrative. It is very doubtful whether England can lay any just claim to the sole invention of one single romance. The “Squyr of Lowe Degre” has been supposed to be native, merely because no French original of it has yet been discovered. If we have not invented, we have certainly so far changed—would that we might say *improved*—the originals in our popular versions, as to make them almost our own. But if England could boast of her Arthur, France could, with somewhat more justice, of her Charlemagne. If the former had obtained immortality by his struggles with the Saxons and Picts, so had the latter by his conquests over the Saracens. Besides, through a confusion natural enough in so romantic an age, the exploits of a greater hero—Charles Martel—were combined with those of the first French emperor, and the glory ascribed to him alone. We may add, that the Eastern warriors formed a subject far more romantic than those of the West: the latter were known to be mere men; the former were suspected to be, if not actual demons, certainly very great magicians. The crusades, too, contributed their full share to the intellectual amusements of these ages.

In fact, from the close of the twelfth century, they almost superseded, for a time, Charlemagne and Arthur. Many of the troubadours and minstrels assumed the cross ; they shared in the toils of Eastern war ; during the intervals of rest they pursued their favourite occupation ; and if they were spared — and many were — to revisit their native land, they were naturally anxious to relate what they had seen, to exaggerate what they had heard ; to compose, for the entertainment both of high-born dames and of the people, the marvellous legends which they had collected in the East. In this path the ecclesiastics appear to have been the most successful. Removed by their profession from the active concerns of war,— provided not only with leisure, but with the talent to turn that leisure to profit,— the best, almost the only, scholars of the period, we need not wonder that they should have produced most of our romantic fictions. They were forbidden, indeed, to play on musical instruments ; but, if they could not be minstrels themselves, they could compose for those who were. Most of the fictions, however, of this period were not adapted to the harp ; they were intended merely for recitation ; nor, where the narrative was the chief intent, were the charms of poetry much regarded. From the reign of the first Richard, who was not only a crusader but a troubadour, and who surrounded himself with poets and minstrels, romances of chivalry, no less than of love, became more popular in England. It is evident, then, that the romances of our ancestors were of a threefold character: those relating to Arthur ; those relating to Charlemagne ; and those which were founded on the crusades. The spirit of the three was sometimes incorporated. The leading exploits, indeed, of Arthur and Charlemagne, were easily confounded. Each had his twelve knights ; each had his round table at which they sat ; Arthur, no less than the emperor, fought with the Saracens. Nor was there much difficulty in combining the romances of chivalry with those

of earlier growth. Hence the character of both often pervaded, in an equal degree, the same composition. We suspect, however, the hypothesis which would restrict the origin of our romances to Brittany, Wales, Normandy, and the crusades, is too exclusive. Scandinavia and Germany have contributed something; and something might be traced to times still more ancient. But this is not the place to refute or establish an hypothesis. Our object is to exhibit analytically, and occasionally with extracts, the character of our ancient romances.\*

On the romance of *Merlin* we shall not dwell; its substance has already been given in the analysis of Geoffrey's Chronicle, and extracts from it in our notice of Nennius. Nor shall we notice *Sir Tristram*, both because there is some doubt as to the period when it was composed, and because it has been rendered sufficiently popular by sir Walter Scott. Next, probably, to *Sir Tristram*, in point of antiquity, is, "*The Geste of Kyng Horn*," a romance in the vernacular language, yet, like all the rest, a translation from the French: it has interest, but inferior, in our opinion, to that of *Iwain and Gawain*, which we shall, therefore, select in preference to the rest, especially as its spirit is more consonant with the extracts we have given from the Welsh Geoffrey. *Iwain and Gawain* are both nephews of king Arthur, both king's sons, both celebrated knights of the table round, and bound to each other by a friendship extraordinary even to an age when social attachments were of a somewhat different character than at present. It may fairly be taken as a representative of the class; and its analysis will, we believe, convince the reader that, whatever advantages modern fictions may have over the ancient, imagination is not one of the number. The original author of this romance was Chrestien de

\* Authorities:—Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, (Dissertations and Notes). Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Romances*, vol. i. Scott, Introduction to *Sir Tristram*. Southey, Introduction to *La Mort d'Arthur*, and others—chiefly from memory.

Troyes, who died in 1191. The romance before us, however, contains so much not to be found in Chrestien's work, such variation in the description, and, occasionally, in the incidents, that it cannot be called a translation: it is an imitation of the Norman original.\*—It opens with one of king Arthur's annual entertainments, held, during Whitsuntide, in the castle of Cardiff. The reader must imagine the number of knights assembled from all parts of Christendom, and the beauty of the high-born damsels. One day, after dinner, when the king had retired to take what the Spaniards would call the *siesta*, sir Colgrevice was, with some difficulty, persuaded to relate an adventure which had befallen him a few years before. Riding alone, in quest of adventure, he came, once upon a time, to a thick wood, so beset with thorns and briars that he had much difficulty to make his way through it. Having passed a whole day in this painful travelling, towards evening he received good hospitality at a fair castle, where, however, he staid one night only: it did not become a knight-errant to spend his time in ease. He entered another forest somewhat more to be dreaded than the one he had passed, since it abounded with lions, bears, leopards, bulls, and other wild beasts. Where this forest lay we are not informed: it was, however, either in Wales or England. Proceeding further, he saw —

“ The fowlest wight,  
“ That ever yit man saw in light; ”

and the description given of the monster certainly justifies the epithet. He had an enormous head; his forehead was broader than “ a twa large span: ” —

“ His face was ful brede and flat,  
His nose was cutted als a cat;  
His browes war like litel buskes  
And his tethe like bare tuskes;

\* See Vol. II. Appendix, p. 350.



A ful grete bulge opon his bak,  
 There was nocht made withouten lac:  
 His chin was fast until his brest.”—

With this lovely creature, of a size more than gigantic, sir Colgrevice was disposed to fight; but it harmlessly entered into conversation with him, assuring him that it was a man, and was the keeper of the savage beasts in the forest. To the knight it seemed marvellous how such animals could be kept in order; but he was assured that the wildest of them were fain to crouch at their keeper's feet. The knight then told the monster that he was in search of adventures, and should be glad if he could be directed to one. He was bid to pursue his way through the forest, and he would soon meet with a well marvellous enough:—

“ The well es under the fairest tree  
 That ever was in this cuntrè.  
 By that well hinges a bacyne <sup>1</sup>  
 That es of gold gude and fyne,  
 With a cheyne <sup>2</sup> truly to tell,  
 That will reche into the well.  
 Thare es a chapel ner thar-by  
 That nobil es, and ful lufely <sup>3</sup>;  
 By the well standes a stane,  
 Take the bacyne sone onane <sup>4</sup>,  
 And cast on water with thi hand,  
 And ȝowe thou sal se new lithand.  
 A storme sal rise, and a tempest.  
 Al about by est and west.  
 Thou sal here mani thonor blast <sup>6</sup>  
 Al about the flawand fast <sup>7</sup>;  
 And there sal cum sliet slete and rayne <sup>8</sup>,  
 That unnese <sup>9</sup> sal thou stand oȝayne. <sup>10</sup>  
 Of lightnes sal thou se a lowe <sup>11</sup>  
 Unnethes thou sal thi-selven knowe :

<sup>1</sup> Basin.<sup>2</sup> Chain.<sup>3</sup> Lovely, beautiful.<sup>4</sup> *Sone onane*, soon, anon, immediately.<sup>5</sup> And soon thou shalt see new tidings.<sup>6</sup> Thou shalt hear many a thunder blast.<sup>7</sup> All around thee raging fast.<sup>8</sup> Such sleet and rain.<sup>9</sup> Scarcely.<sup>10</sup> Against.<sup>11</sup> Light.

And if thou pass withouten grevance,  
 Than has thou the fairest chance  
 That ever yit had ony knyght  
 That theder come to kyth <sup>1</sup> his myght."

With these representations, however, Sir Colgrevice is not daunted. Away he went, found the chapel and the tree, —

" The fayrest thorne  
 That ever groued sen <sup>2</sup> God was born.  
 So thik it was with leves grene  
 Might no rayn cum thar-bytwene:  
 And that grenes lastes ay <sup>3</sup>  
 For no winter dere <sup>4</sup> it may."

There, too, was the well, and the basin, and the stone; the stone being of emerald, supported on four rubies, — all so bright that their lustre was shed over the whole land. Without loss of time he took the basin, drew the water, and cast it on the stone. Suddenly, the sky grew black as pitch, the thunder began to roll, and there came such a storm of hail and rain, that he could scarcely keep his feet; louder and keener the blasts, than were ever emitted by cloud; and the lightning flashed in his face with such fury, accompanied by such intolerable heat, that he expected to be consumed on the spot. So terrific, indeed, was this storm of the elements, that he could not hope to survive it; and had it lasted any longer, it must have been fatal. The tempest ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, to his unspeakable joy; —

" For best comforth of al thing  
 Es solace after myslikeing." <sup>5</sup>

The appearance of nature was much more beautiful

<sup>1</sup> Try.

<sup>2</sup> Grew since.

<sup>3</sup> And that green for ever lasts.

<sup>4</sup> Damage, injure.

<sup>5</sup> "The hues of bliss more brightly glow,  
 Chastised by sabler tints of woe."

*Gray.*

than before ; and singing birds lighted on the tree in such swarms that not a branch could be seen : —

“ So meryly than gon thai sing <sup>1</sup>  
 That al the wode began to ring :  
 Ful mery was the melody  
 Of thaire song and of thaire cry ;  
 Thar herd never man none swelk <sup>2</sup>,  
 But if ani had herd that ilk.”

But this delightful music was succeeded by the noise of horses' feet. A knight advanced, clad in rich armour ; and sir Colgrevice prepared for the onset which was evidently impending. The stranger, after upbraiding him for troubling his repose, and trespassing in the forest, fell furiously on him : but, though sir Colgrevice fought manfully, in the end he was wounded, thrown to the ground with violence, and left in a swoon. On recovering, he found his steed was gone, and he was alone. With difficulty he returned to the castle where he had been entertained the preceding night ; his wounds were soon healed, and he was enabled to revisit king Arthur's court.<sup>3</sup>

Having related this wonderful adventure, sir Colgrevice is reproached by his cousin, sir Iwain, for not telling it sooner ; for if he had, he should soon have been avenged of that stranger knight. The hero is ridiculed by sir Kay, “ the most foul-mouthed ” of Arthur's knights, whose tongue appears to have been somewhat readier than his sword, and who insultingly calls in question both his valour and sir Iwain's. The story was told to the king, who vowed that, with all his knights, squires, and pages, he would explore that forest. This, however, was disagreeable to sir Iwain, who henceforth is the hero of the romance, and who resolved to have a single combat, alone and unseen, with the stranger knight. Secretly and hastily leaving

<sup>1</sup> So merrily they began to sing.

<sup>2</sup> Like.

<sup>3</sup> Ywaine and Gawin, v. 1—456. The only edition of this romance is that of Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, vol. i.

the court, he " he passed many a high mountain, many a wilderness and plain," till he came to the castle, where sir Colgrevice had been entertained. The following morning he proceeded on his way, saw the monster, and was directed to the well. There he did exactly as his cousin had done, experienced the same terrific storm, and, at its end, was assailed by the same formidable antagonist, who came riding through the wood. The combat is very well described : both fought with great valour and great rage ; but, at length, when the armour of both was hacked to pieces, and the blood flowed from their bodies, the stranger knight, who had been mortally wounded, fled. Sir Iwain pursued closely, seeing no living creature by the way, until they arrived at a great castle. The fugitive hastily passed over the draw-bridge, and sir Iwain boldly followed ; but no sooner had our knight's horse placed its foot on the bridge, than the portcullis fell behind him, and, in the descent, cut away the hind legs and haunches of his horse, and grazing his own heels. Nor had he time to dismount from his half-beast, before the other portcullis fell before him, and there he was, as safe as if he had been in the stocks ; the huge barriers before and behind preventing the possibility of moving. In the midst of a sweet meditation as to his fortune, a door softly opened, a damsel entered, and cautiously closed the wicket. Sir knight, was the substance of her address, a fine hostel hast thou ! Nor wilt thou leave it alive ; for thou hast slain my lord ; and his widowed lady and knights vow thy destruction. In the end, however, she bade him be of good cheer, for she would help him to escape. In her childish years, she had belonged to king Arthur's court, where none had shown her any civility, save sir Iwain, son of good king Urien, and she now resolved to show her gratitude by preserving him. She lent him a ring, which had the wonderful virtue of rendering him invisible ; and she had, therefore, no great difficulty in taking him to her own chamber. Scarcely had he partaken of the good cheer, — a roasted capon, bread, and

rich wine, — than he heard a terrible tumult in the castle, of men who were seeking him on every side. She bade him, however, sit on her bed, and be still; for assuredly he could not be seen; and all he had to do was to hold his tongue. She then left him, for fear her absence should cause suspicion. Great was the surprise of the knightly train to find only half the horse within the barrier: they said he must be a necromancer, or he must have wings; and they hurried into every apartment of the castle with their swords drawn. From the bed, on which he sat, he quietly saw them enter the room, and pierce the wainscot with their weapons. What his eyes rested on with most interest was the lady of the castle; “whiter than milk,” fairer than any in that land. She was slowly following her husband’s bier, weeping, and sighing, and tearing her hair, and wringing her hands, so that the blood oozed out of them, and sometimes swooning away; in short, never were such beauty and grief seen before. When Lunet, the damsel, returned to him, he begged to have another view of the lady; and he was placed in a situation where he could gratify his curiosity. Fatal did it prove to him; for —

“Luf<sup>1</sup> that is so inekil of mayne<sup>2</sup>,  
 fār had wounded sir Iwain,  
 That whareso he sal ride or ga<sup>3</sup>,  
 His hert she has that es his fa.”<sup>4</sup>

After the funeral rites were duly paid, the lady’s grief remained strong as ever; her tears, mournings, and prayers were incessant. A psalter of gold she had, before which she was continually kneeling: and so absorbed was she that she took no notice of any living thing. Little prospect did there seem of a happy issue to sir Iwain’s life; — she his sworn enemy too: —

<sup>1</sup> Love.

<sup>2</sup> So much of strength.

That whithersoever he shall ride or go.

<sup>4</sup> His heart she has who is his foe.

“ He said, I am mekil to blame  
 That i luf tham that wald me shame ;  
 Bat yit i wite hir al with wogh  
 Sen that i hir lord slogh <sup>1</sup>,  
 I can nocht se by makyn gyn <sup>2</sup>,  
 How that i hir luf sold wyn.”

Her beauty, however, is such, and his heart is so engaged, that he manfully wishes to stake his life on the cast : —

“ He sayd he sold have hir to wive  
 Or els he sold lose his lyve.”

The damsel, observing his dejection, hoped to enliven him, by assuring him, that whatever danger attended the enterprise, she would soon see him beyond the precincts of the castle. He replied, that he was in no hurry to leave the place ; and that when he did leave it, he would not steal away, but go openly, in broad daylight, and honourably attended. These words made the damsel suspect the truth ; but without betraying her knowledge or intention, she went to her mistress, whose favourite and counsellor she had always been. What follows is described with great art, and much power of satire, — whether with much knowledge of human nature, let those decide who are better acquainted with the female heart than we are ; one thing is certain, — it would not disgrace the author of Richard III. When the damsel entered, the lady scarcely noticed her presence ; but this did not discourage her. Madam, was the substance of her address, I wonder much that you will thus continue your excessive and unavailing sorrow ; for God’s love, leave your wailing for a while, and think how you are to resist king Arthur, who comes against you. What knight have you to defend you and your land. Yet if you do not find some one to stead you, of a surety, away goes your fair domain. But estates and lordships were below the consideration of the af-

<sup>1</sup> Since that I her lord slew.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot see by what contrivance.

flicted widow, who, in no gracious tone, bade her begone, wondering how she dared thus to use such words. "Madam," said the pert slut, "it is common enough for women to blame those who would give good counsel;" and so saying, she left the room. The lady began to think that she had been unreasonable to reproach one who had her own good at heart; and so she sat, no longer moaning, but musing. The damsel returned, and seeing that a good impression was already made, began to speak more boldly. "I wonder, my lady, at your immoderate grief: surely somebody can be found to defend this fair castle; all the flower of chivalry cannot be buried with my lord. This heaven forbid! as good as he remain, — better even, —

There lyes, she sayd, by hevyn quene !

Tell me, if thou canst, of a single knight so valiant as my dear husband." — "That I will," said the maiden; "only you must promise not to be angry with me for speaking the truth when you bid me; you must promise that you will continue to love me." The lady, mollified, replied, that, of a surety, nothing that she should say could offend her. "Madam," demanded the arch jade with much simplicity, "if two knights, equally armed, fight fairly, and one kills the other, which is the more valiant man?" — "Of a surety," said the lady, "the one who wins the battle." — "Well, then," replied Lunet, "as my lord was mortally wounded and pursued to these gates, by another knight, that knight is more valorous and hath more courage than even had my lord!" — "Great shame should be thine!" cries the enraged lady, "thus to speak of my lord before my face! Besides, thou beliest him; get out of my sight!" With another exclamation that her words did not deserve such treatment, Lunet hastily went to her chamber to guard sir Iwain. Again the lady reflected on her injustice to the poor girl; and she began to think more seriously of her situation. Sure enough, king Arthur would take her castle and lands, unless she had

some knight to defend her. "Cruel have I been, thus to scold my faithful counsellor: well does she believe that I shall never more love her as I have loved her: yet will I love her the better, for all she said was for my good!" That night the damsel did not return: she allowed the impression to deepen before she would renew the stroke. That night, too, as on some preceding ones, sir Iwain remained in her apartment; for nothing can exceed the confidence with which the ladies of romance trusted themselves to the society of the other sex.

"On the morn the maiden rase  
 And into chamber sone she gase,  
 War sho fyndes the faire lady  
 Hingand hir hevud ful drerily<sup>1</sup>,  
 In the place whar sho hir left,  
 And ilka dele<sup>2</sup> sho talde hir eft<sup>3</sup>  
 Als sho had said to hir bifor.  
 Than said the lady, Me rowes sore<sup>4</sup>  
 That i missayd the<sup>5</sup> yisterday,  
 I wil amend if that I may.  
 Of that knyght now wald i her<sup>6</sup>  
 What he war and whether he wer<sup>7</sup>:  
 I wate<sup>8</sup> that i have sayd omis<sup>9</sup>,  
 Now wil i do als thou me wys<sup>10</sup>:  
 Tel me baldely, or thou bliu<sup>11</sup>,  
 If he be cumen of gentil kyn.  
 'Madame,' sho said, 'i dar warand<sup>12</sup>  
 A genteler lord es none lifand<sup>13</sup>,  
 The hendest<sup>14</sup> man ye sal him fynde  
 That ever come of Adam's kynde.'  
 'How that he?'<sup>15</sup> say me for, certayne<sup>16</sup>;  
 'Madame,' sho said, 'sir Ywayne;  
 So gentil knyght have ye noght sene<sup>17</sup>;  
 He es the kyng's son Uryene.'

<sup>1</sup> Hanging her head full drearily.

<sup>2 3</sup> And what grief, she told her oft — how her lady's words had afflicted her.

<sup>4</sup> It reues me much — I am very sorry.

<sup>5</sup> Scolded.

<sup>6</sup> Now would I hear.

<sup>7</sup> What he was, and whence he came.

<sup>8 9</sup> I know that I have spoken wrong.

<sup>10</sup> As thou wouldst have me to do.

<sup>11</sup> Ere thou cease — before thou hast done speaking.

<sup>12</sup> I dare wager.

<sup>13</sup> A nobler lord is not alive.

<sup>14</sup> The most courteous.

<sup>16</sup> Certainly, truly.

<sup>15 17</sup> How is he called? What is his name?  
 So noble a knight have I not seen.



“ Well pleased was the lady with the tidings,” that her husband’s murderer was a king’s son. Grief had now fled, and reason resumed its empire. But with all the consolation which philosophy, resignation, and good counsel can effect, we should scarcely expect curiosity enough to prompt such questions as to his family and name. “ But she had flyted herself” for her behaviour to her poor damsel, and to make amends she would now be compliant. That she even outstripped the hopes of her attendant, appears from the extraordinary request—

“ Do me have him here in my sight,  
 Betwene this and thrid night !  
 And ar <sup>1</sup> if that are might be <sup>2</sup> :  
 Me langes far him for to se <sup>3</sup> —,  
 Bring him if thou mai this night !”

The maiden’s turn it was now to pull in the reins : she knew better than to produce the new lover immediately ; for whatever anxiety her mistress might have to see him, she did not wish to risk any thing by a premature interview. Besides, she knew that love is increased by agitation. “ Madam,” was the substance of her reply, “ to-night I cannot bring him, for his hostel is above a day’s journey from here. But I have a swift page that will run without delay, and bring him by to-morrow night.” Said the lady, “ See that he do. Bid him make haste, and meet guerdon shall he have for his speed.” The maid now advised her mistress to assemble her knights, vassals, and counsellors, to lay her situation before them ; and as she was sure none of them would dare to challenge king Arthur or his knights, they would naturally advise her to procure a knight for the purpose. To lull suspicion of her purpose, however, she was to tell them that she would do nothing without their advice,—a compliment that could not fail to please them. “ By God of myght,” said the lady—heroines of romance stagger as little at an oath as that queen of

<sup>1</sup> And before.

<sup>2</sup> If before might be

<sup>3</sup> I long to see him.

swearers, Elizabeth of England—"I will harangue them this very night:—

"Methink thou dwelles ful lang her<sup>1</sup>  
Send forth swith<sup>2</sup> thi messenger!"

Cheerful from this moment was the lady's look; she ordered her council to assemble, while Lunet habited sir Iwain in a magnificent robe of scarlet, well ornamented with gold fringe, encompassed by a girdle glittering with precious stones. At length she told her lady that the messenger was come; and the lady's impatience was such that she could scarcely wait until he was privately introduced to her:—

"Then the maiden went ogayn  
Hastily to sir Ywayne,  
'Sir,' sho said, 'als have i wyn<sup>3</sup>,  
My lady wate thou ert hereyn.<sup>4</sup>  
'To cum bifor hir, luke thou be balde,<sup>5</sup>  
And tak gode tent what i here talde.'<sup>6</sup>  
By the hand sho toke the knyght,  
And led him unto chambre right."

The knight felt the scene to be a delicate one: there was something, he thought, not quite chivalrous in thus commencing the courtship of one whom he had made a widow not quite a week before.\* Besides, he was in love, and he trembled sore. The widow, too, had her thoughts: to be sure, she would have another husband; but then it was at least decent that she should wait to hear what he had first to say. A few moments' silence, when the maid, bursting into a laugh, bade him be of

<sup>1</sup> Methinks thou delayest here too long.

<sup>2</sup> Swiftly.

<sup>3</sup> I have succeeded.

<sup>4</sup> My lady knows that thou art here.

<sup>5</sup> To come before her, see you be bold.

<sup>6</sup> And take good heed to what I have said.

\* We doubt whether half a week; for the time is not very clearly distinguished. It is, however, certain that Arthur and his knights had not yet reached the well,—a journey which sir Colgrevice and sir Iwain had performed in less than two days.

good courage, for he had nothing to fear. He then mustered spirits:—

“ ‘Madame, i yelde me you until<sup>1</sup>  
 Ever to be at youre will,  
 Yf thát I might i ne wald nocht flee.’  
 She said, ‘Nay! whi sold so be?’<sup>2</sup>  
 To ded yf i gert do the now<sup>3</sup>  
 To me it war ful litel prow.’<sup>4</sup>”

In short, to abridge the conversation, she immediately forgave him, heard with satisfaction his declaration of love, engaged to take him as her lord, and then—went to consult her vassals. She opened the somewhat delicate business by declaring that the defence no less than the weal of the little state required that she should choose another lord; but very condescendingly asked their counsel. They professed cheerful obedience to her will. Joyfully she hastened to sir Iwain: “Now God thee save, but no other lord will I have than thee! Wrong should I be to forsake so noble a knight,—a king’s son too!” He was immediately introduced to the assembled vassals; all rose to receive him. Knowing their lady’s mind, they very dutifully asserted that none else was fit to be her husband. Then seating herself under the princely dais, she commanded the steward of her household to harangue them. The object of his speech was to show that, as the marriage was advisable, why not take place immediately? why not that very night? “Why not?” said the counsellors: why not? thought the lady; so from the hall they went to church, and from church to bower.\*

The preceding scene, we repeat, is not unworthy of Shakspeare. While it was passing, king Arthur and his knights were proceeding to the magic well in the

<sup>1</sup> I yield me to you.

<sup>2</sup> “If I could, I would not flee.”

She said, “Nay, why should that be?”

<sup>3</sup> If I were now to put thee to death.

<sup>4</sup> Little profit would it be to me.

\* Ywayne and Gawin, v. 456—1260.

forest. On arriving there, great were the taunts of sir Kay, that the boaster sir Iwain had not accompanied them, or met them there. Sir Gawin defended his cousin from the charge of cowardice, saying, assuredly he would be there that day if he were not dead, or in durance vile.

“ The king kest water on the stane,  
 The storme rase ful sone snane<sup>1</sup>,  
 With wikhed weders kene and calde<sup>2</sup>.  
 Als it war biforhand talde.  
 The king and his men ilkane<sup>3</sup>  
 Wend tharwith<sup>4</sup> to here bene slaue:  
 So blew it stor with slete and rayne<sup>4</sup>;  
 And hastily than sir Ywayne,  
 Dight him graythly in his ger<sup>5</sup>  
 With nobil shelde and strong sper.  
 When he was dight in seker wede<sup>6</sup>.  
 Than he umstrade<sup>7</sup> a nobil stede:  
 Him thocht that he was als lyght  
 Als a fowl es to the flyght<sup>8</sup>:  
 Unto the well fast wendes he;  
 And some when thai myght him se  
 Syr Kay, for he wald nocht fayle,  
 Smertly askes the butayl.  
 And alsone than said the kyng,  
 ‘ Sir Kay, i graute the thine askyng!’  
 Than sir Ywayn neghed tham ner<sup>9</sup>  
 Thair cowntenance to see and her,  
 Sir Kay than on his stede gan spring,  
 ‘ Ber the wel now!’<sup>10</sup> said the king.  
 Full glad and blith was syr Ywayne  
 When sir Kay come him ogayn<sup>11</sup>;  
 But sir Kay wist nocht wha it was<sup>12</sup>,  
 He finds his fer now er he pas.<sup>13</sup>  
 Syr Ywayne thinkes now to be wroken<sup>14</sup>  
 On the grete words that Kay had spoken.

<sup>1</sup> Soon, anon, instantly.

<sup>2</sup> With stormy weather, keen and cold.

<sup>3</sup> Each one.

<sup>4</sup> So blew it fiercely with sleet and rain.

<sup>5</sup> Clad him readily in his gear.

<sup>6</sup> In such arms.

<sup>7</sup> Bestrode.

<sup>8</sup> He thought that he felt as light  
 As is a bird when in its flight.

<sup>9</sup> Approached near.

<sup>10</sup> Bear thee well, now!

<sup>11</sup> Against him.

<sup>12</sup> Knew not who it was.

<sup>13</sup> He finds his match now e'er he goes.

<sup>14</sup> Revenged.

Thai rade to geder with speres kene  
 Than was no reverence them bitwene.  
 Sir Ywayn gan sir Kay bere <sup>1</sup>  
 Out of his sadel lenkitt of his sper<sup>2</sup>;  
 His helm unto the erth smate,  
 A fote depe the arin yet bate.<sup>3</sup>  
 He wold do him na mor despote,  
 Bot down he lighted als tyte.<sup>4</sup>  
 Sir Kay stede he toke in hy<sup>5</sup>,  
 And presand the king ful curtaysly.  
 Wonder glad than war thai all  
 That Kay so fowl a shame gen fall;  
 And ilkone sayd til other then<sup>6</sup>,  
 ' This es he that scornes al men !'  
 Of his wa war thai wele paid.  
 Syr Ywain than to the kyng said,  
 ' Sir kyng, i gif to the this stede:  
 And to me war it grete trispas  
 Forto withhald that yowres was.'  
 ' What man ertou ?'<sup>7</sup> quod <sup>8</sup> the kyng :  
 ' Of the have i na knawyng.  
 Bot if thou unarmed were,  
 Or els the name that i might her.'  
 ' Lord,' he sayd, ' i am Ywayne !'  
 Than was the kyng ferly fayne<sup>9</sup> :  
 A sari man than was sir Kay,  
 That said that he was stollen away.  
 Al descumfite <sup>10</sup> he lay on grownde ;  
 To him that was a sary stownde.<sup>11</sup>  
 The king and his men war ful glad  
 That thai so syr Ywayn had,  
 And ful glad was sir Ywayne  
 Of the welefar of sir Gawayne ;  
 For nang was to him half so dere  
 Of all that in the coust wer."\*

Sir Iwain conducted the king and his brother to the castle, and sumptuous was the entertainment prepared for them by his bride: a week's feasting, mirth,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Kay to bear.

<sup>2</sup> Out of his saddle the length of a spear.

<sup>3</sup> A foot deep therein it thrust.

<sup>4</sup> Quickly

<sup>5</sup> Sir Kay's steed he took in haste.

<sup>6</sup> And each one said to the other then.

<sup>7</sup> Art thou ?

<sup>8</sup> Quoth.

<sup>9</sup> Very glad.

<sup>10</sup> Overcome.

<sup>11</sup> A sad time.

\* Ywayne and Gawin, v. 1260—1350.

and minstrelsy followed.—And here the romance ought to end ; for though little more than one third of it is yet analysed, the remainder has little connection with the preceding. It contains various adventures of sir Iwain. Like a true knight, he could not always spend his days in sloth ; so with difficulty he obtained<sup>d</sup> his bride's consent to go in search of adventures. She told him, however, that if he did not return by that day twelvemonths, he would of a surety lose her for ever ; and that no loss of blood, or bonds, might detain him, she gave him a magic ring, which possessed the virtue of securing the wearer against every possible mishap. Away went sir Iwain ; but so absorbed was he by his chivalric feats, that he forgot the day appointed for his return until it was past ; and while at Arthur's court, he had the mortification to see a maiden from his lady come and demand the ring, proclaiming him at the same time a traitor to love and to knightly faith, and telling him that his lady's heart was no longer his. So great, we are told, was the knight's grief, that he hastily left the court, plunged into the forests, and lost his reason, wandering about naked, and subsisting on the flesh which he procured by the chase. After some time, however, he was restored through the virtue of a precious ointment, and enabled to pursue his adventures. But despair was always on him : he had no rest of body or mind. Wonderful were the feats he performed ; but fame gave him no pleasure. Not the least remarkable of his adventures was, that, finding a lion and a dragon one day fighting, he took the part of the former ; and slew the latter ; and so grateful was the lion, that from that day forward it followed him just like a spaniel. On more than one occasion this faithful animal helped him in battle, when he had several enemies to contend with ; and through it he won several victories. At length he rescued Lunet from burning, by becoming her champion, and slaying her adversaries ; and in gratitude she resolved to reconcile him with his lady. But this was a work of great difficulty ; it required a degree

of art not inferior to that which the fair Abigail had shown on a former occasion ; yet in the end she succeeded, and the two were reunited. The romance ends, as it begins, with a most orthodox prayer :—

“ But Jhesus Christ, for his grete grace,  
 In hevyn blis grante us a place,  
 To hide in, if his wills be,  
 Amen, amen pur charite ! ” \*

Though the imagery of this romance is in substance Gothic, it is easy to perceive some glimmerings of an oriental character. Such, undoubtedly, are the scene at the well, and the ring which rendered the wearer invisible. The invention displayed in the parts we have selected—and they are fully equalled by those which we have passed over—will assuredly bear comparison with that of our most celebrated modern works of fiction. We could select other romances, which modern fiction would in vain attempt to equal. In the preceding extracts, however, there is very little of what we may term poetical imagery ; in fact, our ancestors looked rather to the substance than to the manner, rather to the narration than to the words. But let it not be supposed that all romances are thus scantily furnished with such imagery. In several, we have passages which show what the authors might have done had they been so inclined. Thus, in Merlin :—

• •  
 “ A merry time it is in May,  
 When springeth the summer's day,  
 And damisels carols leadeth,  
 On green wood fowls gradeth.  
 Mirie it is in time of June,  
 When fenil hangeth abroad in tune :  
 Violet and rose flower  
 Woneth then in maiden's bower,  
 The sonne is hot, the day is long,  
 Foulis maketh miri song.

\* Ywayne and Gawin, from v. 1350. to the end.

In time of winter olange it is!  
 The foulis lesen her blis.  
 The leves fallen off the tree,  
*Rain alongeth the cuntree.*  
 \* \* \*

“Miri is the entrée of May,  
 The fowles maketh mirie play : •  
 Maidens singeth and maketh play :  
 The time is hot and long the day  
 The jolif nightingale singeth,  
 In the grene mede flowers springeth.  
 \* \* \*

“Listeneth now, fel and few : •  
 In May the sunne felleth dew :  
 The day is miri and draweth long,  
 The lark arereth her song.  
 To meed goth the damisele  
 And faire flowers gadreth fele.  
 \* \* \*

“Mirie is June that scheweth flower,  
 The meden ben of swete odour,  
 Lily and rose of swete colour :  
 The river clear withouten sour,  
 This damiseles love par amour.”

In judging of the poetical talent of our ancestors, we are too apt to be repulsed by their (to us) uncouth language. We should, however, remember that language is but the medium of imagination; that conceptions should be estimated without regard to the garb in which they appear. It is surely no disparagement to the ancient poets, that human speech is not immutable. In their day, they employed the conventional forms of words then in use; and as their language was the most cultivated of the period, justice to them requires that, before they are condemned, their compositions should be translated into the corresponding idiom of the present day. In four centuries from the present time, will a Byron, a Scott, or a Southey, be more intelligible than the great masters of romance four centuries ago?\*

If from the romantic, we turn to the amatory, de-

\* Romance of Merlin, part i. and ii. various cantos.



scriptive, and satirical poetry of the period, we shall find much deserving of our attention. Take, for instance, the following stanzas on spring, which are probably as old as the earlier part of the thirteenth century:—

“Lenten ys come with love to toun,  
 With blosmen ant with briddes rounde  
     That al this blisse bringeth :  
 Dayes ezes in this dales  
 Notes suete of nyghtegales ;  
     Uch foul song singeth.

“The threstlecoe him threteth oo,  
 Away es huere wynter wo,  
     When woderove springeth :  
 This foules singeth ferly fele  
 Ant whyteth on huere wynter wele  
     That al the wode ryngeth.

“The rose rayleth hir rode,  
 The leves on the lyghte wode  
     Waxen all with wille :  
 The mone mandeth hire bleo  
 The lilie is lossum to seo  
     The fenyl and the fille.

“Wroces this wild drake,  
 Milès murgeth huere makes  
     As streme that striketh stille  
 Modry meneth so doh mo  
 Ichott cham on of tho  
     For love that likes ille.

“The mone mandeth hire lyght  
 (So doth the semly sonne bryght)  
     When briddes singeth breme,  
 Deawes donketh the dounes  
 Deores with huere derne rounes  
     Domes forte deme.

“Wormes woweth under cloude,  
 Wymmen waxith wondir proude,

So wel hyt wal hem seme :  
 Yef me shall wonte wille of on  
 This wunne weole y wole forgon  
 Ant whyt in wode be fleme."\*

Turn this excellent song into the corresponding language of the day, and we know not the living poet who might be ashamed to own it. A still more remarkable poem is the following, — remarkable alike for its language and its satire — which is evidently aimed at *double* monasteries. It is of the thirteenth century; and is probably an imitation of some popular French piece.

“ Far in sea, by West Spain,  
 Is a land *ihole Cokaygne*<sup>1</sup>,  
 There n’ is land under *heaven-rich*<sup>2</sup>  
 Of *wel*<sup>3</sup> of goodness it y-like ;  
 Though Paradise be merry and bright,  
 Cokaygne is of fairer sight.  
 What is there in Paradise  
 But grass and flower and green *rise* ?<sup>4</sup>  
 Though there be joy and great *dute*<sup>5</sup>  
 There n’ is meat but fruit.  
 There n’ is hall, bure no bench<sup>6</sup>,  
 But water man is thirst to quenche.  
*Beth* there no men but two<sup>7</sup>  
 Holy and Enoch also.  
*Clinglich* may *hi*<sup>8</sup> go  
 Where there *wonith* men no *mo.*<sup>9</sup>  
 In Cokaygne is meat and drink,  
 Without care, *how* and *swink*.<sup>10</sup>  
 The meat is *trie*<sup>11</sup>, the drink so clear,  
 To noon, *russin*<sup>12</sup>, and suppere.  
 I *sigge*, (*for sooth boot were*<sup>13</sup>)  
 There n’ is land on earth is peer.  
 Under heaven n’ is land I *wiss*<sup>14</sup>  
 Of so *mochil*<sup>15</sup> joy and bliss.

<sup>1</sup> Called Cockaigne. Cockaigne may be understood as signifying the land of cooks.

<sup>2</sup> Heaven’s kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> Branches.

<sup>7</sup> Are.

<sup>9</sup> Abideth, dwelleth.

<sup>11</sup> Choice.

<sup>14</sup> I knew.

<sup>3</sup> Wealth, abundance.

<sup>5</sup> Pleasure. <sup>6</sup> Lower. No, nor.

<sup>8</sup> *Clinglich*, clean. *Hi*, they.

<sup>10</sup> Anxiety and labour.

<sup>12</sup> Lunch.

<sup>13</sup> I say, for truth is best.

<sup>15</sup> Much.

\* Warton’s History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 31. Warton is the worst critic, except Turner, we ever followed. He has no taste either for language or poetry. But Oxford was satisfied.

- " There is many swete sight :  
 All is day, an' is there no night :  
 There n' is *baret*<sup>1</sup> nother strife,  
 N' is there no death, *eu*<sup>2</sup> ever life.  
 There n' is lack of meat *no* cloth ;  
 There n' is man *no* woman wroth ;  
 Therè n' serpent, wolf, *no* fox :  
 Horse *no capit*<sup>3</sup>, cow *no* ox :  
 There n' is sheep, *no* swine, *no* goat  
*No none horwyta*<sup>4</sup>, God it wot,  
 Nother *harate*<sup>5</sup>, nother stud,  
 'The land is full of other good.
- " N' is there fly, flea, *no* louse,  
 In cloth, in town, bed, *no* house.  
 These n' is *dunnir*<sup>6</sup>, sleet, *no* hail ;  
*No none* vile worm, *no* snail ;  
*No none* storm, rain, *no* wind  
 There n' is man *no* woman blind :  
*Ok*<sup>7</sup> all is game, joy, and glee.  
 Well is him that there may be !
- " There both rivers, great and fine,  
 Of oil, milk, honey, and wine.  
 Water serveth there to no thing  
 But to *siyt*<sup>8</sup> and to washing.  
 There is manner fruit :  
 All is solace and *dedute*.<sup>9</sup>
- " There is a well-fair abbey  
 Of white monks, and of grey ;  
 There both bowers, and halls ;  
 All of pasties both the walls,  
 Of flesh, of fish, and a rich meat,  
 The likefullest thot men may eat.  
 Flourer cakes both the *shingles*<sup>10</sup> all  
 Of church, cloister, bowers, and hall.  
 The *pinnes* beth fat puddings<sup>11</sup>,  
 Man may these of *eat enoy*,  
 All with *riyt*, and nought with *woy*<sup>12</sup>,  
 All is common to young and old,  
 To stout and stern, meek and bold.

<sup>1</sup> Wrangling.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, groom.

<sup>6</sup> Thunder.

<sup>9</sup> Delight.

<sup>12</sup> At pleasure, without weight.

<sup>2</sup> But.

<sup>5</sup> Place for breeding horses.

<sup>7</sup> But.

<sup>10</sup> Broader tiles.

<sup>3</sup> Horse.

<sup>8</sup> To boil.

<sup>11</sup> Pinnacles.

" There is a cloister fair and light,  
 Broad and long, of seemly sight.  
 The pillars of that cloister all  
 Beth y-turned of chrystàl,  
 With *harlas* <sup>1</sup> and capital  
 Of green jaspè and red coràl.  
 In the *prær* <sup>2</sup> is a tree,  
*Swithe* <sup>3</sup> likeful for to see.  
 The root is ginger and *guingale* <sup>4</sup>,  
 The scions beth all *sedwale* <sup>5</sup>,  
*Trie* <sup>6</sup> maces hath the flower,  
 The rind *canel* <sup>7</sup> of sweet odour ;  
 The fruit *gilofre* of good smack. <sup>8</sup>  
 Of *cucubes* <sup>9</sup> there n' is no lack,  
 There beth roses of red *blee* <sup>10</sup>,  
 And lily, likeful for to see :  
 They *falloweth* <sup>11</sup> never *no* night ;  
 This ought he a sweet sight.  
 There beth four *wells* <sup>12</sup> in the abbèy  
 Of *treacle*, and *halwei* <sup>13</sup>,  
 Of *baum*, and eke *pimint* <sup>14</sup>,  
 Ever *ernend* to *right rent* <sup>15</sup> ;  
 Of they streames all the mould,  
 Stones precious, and gold.  
 These is sapphire, and uniune,  
 Carbuncle, and astiune,  
 Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune.  
 Beryl, onyx, *teposiune*,  
 Amethyst, and chrysolite,  
 Chalcedon, and epetite. <sup>•</sup>  
 There beth birdes many and *fale* <sup>16</sup>  
 Throstle, thrush, and nightingale,  
*Chalandre*, and *wood-wale* <sup>17</sup>,  
 And other birdes without tal, <sup>•</sup>  
 That stinteth never by *har* might  
 Merry to sing, day and night.

(Here a few lines are lost.)

<sup>1</sup> Borders.

<sup>2</sup> Meadow.

<sup>3</sup> Very.

<sup>4</sup> The root of the sweet cyperus.

<sup>5</sup> Valerian, or perhaps the mountain spikenard.

<sup>6</sup> Chain. <sup>7</sup> Cinnamon.

<sup>8</sup> Cloves.

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps cuckoo flowers.

<sup>10</sup> Colour.

<sup>11</sup> Grow yellow, fade.

<sup>12</sup> Springs.

<sup>13</sup> Sirup. Of *halwei* we know not the meaning.

<sup>14</sup> Balsam and pimento, or spiced wine.

<sup>15</sup> Running in full stream.

<sup>16</sup> Numerous.

<sup>17</sup> Goldfinch, and perhaps woodlark.

Yet I do you mo to wit,  
 The geese y-roasted on the spit  
 Flee to that abbey, God it wot,  
 And *gredith* <sup>1</sup> ' Geese all hot! all hot!'  
*Hi* bringeth *galek* <sup>2</sup> great plentè,  
 The best *y-dight* <sup>3</sup> that man may see.  
 The *leverokes* that beth *couth* <sup>4</sup>,  
 Lieth adown to man-is mouth,  
*Y-dight* in stew full *swithe* <sup>5</sup> well,  
 Powder'd with *gingelofre* and *canèl*. <sup>6</sup>

" N' is no speech of no drink ;  
 All 'ake enough withoute *swink*. <sup>7</sup>  
 When the monkes *geeth* <sup>8</sup> to mass,  
 All the *fenestres* <sup>9</sup>, that beth of glass,  
 Turneth into chrystal bright,  
 To give monkes more light.  
 When the mass beth *iscud* <sup>10</sup>,  
 And the bookes *up-ileud* <sup>11</sup>,  
 The chrystal turneth into glass  
 In state that it rather was.

" The young monkes each day  
 After meat goeth to play ;  
 N' is there hawk *no* fowl so swift  
 Better fleeing by the lift  
 Than the monkes, *high* of mood,  
 With *har* sleeves and *har* <sup>12</sup> hood.  
 When the abbot seeth *ham* flee,  
 That he holds for much glee.  
*Ac* natheless, all there among,  
 He biddeth *ham* light to eve song,  
 The monkes' lighteth nought adown,  
*Ac* for fleth *into randùn* <sup>13</sup> ;  
 When the abbot him *y*-seeth,  
 That his monks from him fleeth,  
 He taketh maiden of the route  
 And turneth up her white toute,  
 And beateth the tabor with his han  
 To make his monkes light to land.  
 When his monkes that *y*-seeth,  
 To the maid down hi fleeth,

<sup>1</sup> Cry.<sup>2</sup> Dressed.<sup>3</sup> Quickly.<sup>4</sup> Go.<sup>11</sup> Laid aside.<sup>2</sup> Singing birds.<sup>4</sup> Larks — caught.<sup>6</sup> Ginger and cinnamon.<sup>9</sup> Windows.<sup>12</sup> Their.<sup>7</sup> Labour.<sup>10</sup> Ended.<sup>13</sup> At random.

And goeth the wench all aboute  
 And thwacketh all her white toute.  
 And sith, after her swink  
 Wendeth meekly home to drink ;  
 And goeth to har collation  
 A well fair procession.

“ Another abbey is thereby,  
 Forsooth a great fair nunnery :  
 Up a river of sweet milk  
 Where is plenty great of silk.  
 When the summer's day is hot,  
 The young nunnes taketh a boat,  
 And doth ham forth in that rivere,  
 Both with oares and with steer.  
 When hi beth far from the abbey  
*Hi* maketh *ham* <sup>1</sup> naked for to play,  
 And lieth down into the brim,  
 And doth ham sliely for to swim.  
 The young monkes that hi seeth,  
*Hi* doth ham up and forth hi fleeth,  
 And cometh to the nunnes anon.  
 And each monke him taketh one,  
 And *snellich* <sup>2</sup> beareth forth har prey  
 To the *mochil* grey abbey.  
 And teacheth the nunnes an orison  
 With *jumbleuc* <sup>3</sup> up and down.  
 The monke that wol be *stalan* <sup>4</sup> good,  
 And can set aright his hood,  
 He shall have, without dangere,  
 Twelve wives each year :  
 All through right, and nought through grace,  
 For to do himself solace.  
 And thilk monke that *dipeth* <sup>5</sup> best,  
 And doth his *likam* <sup>6</sup> all to rest,  
 Of him is hope, God it wot,  
 To be sure father abbot.

“ Who so will come that land to,  
 Full great penance he must do :  
 Seven years in swine's *dritte* <sup>7</sup>  
 He mot wade, *wol ye y-witte* <sup>8</sup>,  
 All anon up to the chin,  
 So shall he the land win.

1 They — them.  
 4 Stout.  
 7 Dung.

2 Nimbley.  
 5 Embraceth.  
 8 You must know.

3 Gamble.  
 6 His fellowa.

“ Lordings, good and *hend* <sup>1</sup>,  
 Mot ye never off world wend,  
 Fore ye stand to your chance,  
 And fulfill that penance.  
 That ye not that land y-see,  
 And never more turn *aye*. <sup>2</sup>

“ Pray we to God so must it be!  
 Amen, for saint charite ! ”\*

The number of English poets before Gower and Chaucer is very considerable. By Robert of Gloucester we have a rhymed chronicle of England, containing, however, nothing worthy the name of poetry. The same judgment may be passed on Robert de Brunne, author of the *Manuel des Peches*; whose tales, however, are not without interest. For an account of him, as well as of Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hanpole, and author of the “*Prilike of Conscience*,” we refer to Mr. Turner, who has, very creditably to himself, rummaged the MSS. of the Museum with success. To the same valuable work, too, we refer for an account of *Piers the Ploughman’s Vision and Creed*, — ascribed to a secular priest, named Langland, of the fourteenth century. With our poets from Gower and Chaucer downwards, every reader is or ought to be acquainted; and as they have been published in so many forms, so as to be accessible every where, we will dwell no longer on the subject.†

The vernacular literature of our ancestors was not confined to poetry. In our great libraries there are prose homilies and tales in abundance, and there are not a few moral discourses. Some of the tales were printed in the latter half of the fifteenth century; but the great majority remain in MS. Many of both relate to the days of chivalry, especially to Arthur and his knights; but there are not a few which may be regarded as

<sup>1</sup> Civil.

<sup>2</sup> Again.

\* Ellis, *Specimens of the early English Poets*, vol. i. p. 83, &c.

† Turner, *History of England*, vol. v. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. and ii. (edit. 1824). Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. i.

imitations of the *Gesta Romanorum*, — the great storehouse of legendary lore during the middle ages. To these, and not to the Italian novelists, is Chaucer indebted for some of his best stories. These *Gesta* were originally collected and published in Latin, about the middle of the fourteenth century ;\* but from what sources the collector derived them we know not. Boccaccio seems to have been indebted to the same unknown source ; for we can hardly think that he took his stories from the *Gesta*, which were, probably, not published when he began his inimitable work. Into this wide field, however, richly as it would repay the trouble of exploring, we cannot enter. Literary history has been lamentably neglected, — in no country so much as England. We may add, that in none is there so little encouragement to laborious research.\*

III. SCIENCE, &c. — At this subject we can but glance. After the Conquest, the English had the benefit not only of the scientific works written by Saxon ecclesiastics, — by Bede and Bridferth especially, — but of such as had recently appeared on the Continent. By being brought into a closer contact with the scholars of the Continent, especially of France, their knowledge was greatly extended. The improvement in their architectural skill is sufficiently obvious from the noble ruins still extant of the Norman times. Agriculture was no less cultivated : foreigners speak with admiration of the fertility of the island ; and this fertility must be ascribed to cultivation alone. In a former passage † we have shown, that the vine was reared with success in England, and that our wines were, by some, thought equal to those of France. In the domestic arts there was evidently, too, a progress for the better. In astronomy, the mathematics, physics, logic, and metaphysics, considerable accessions were made to the knowledge of the An-

\* See the *Gesta Romanorum*, the *Mort d'Arthur*, and other works of the period. Some curious books were printed by Wynkin de Worde and Caxton.

† See *Agriculture of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii.



glo-Saxon period by an intercourse with the Arabs of Spain, or, rather, with the Christian doctors, who had themselves been instructed by Arabian teachers. In the eleventh century, an Arabian chronicle and even the Koran were translated into Latin, by an Englishman who had studied on the banks of the Ebro. The same noble ardour for knowledge drew Adelard of Bath to the Peninsula. The latter wrote a diatribe (still extant) on the various subjects of philosophy, with the view of exhibiting the knowledge which he had acquired. He is called the father of natural philosophy in England; but we know not that he deserves the title. He could write with more fluency than Bridferth and the other commentators on Bede; but he does not appear to have possessed equal solidity of science. In the twelfth century, we find the names of three Englishmen capable of translating from the Arabic; of these, one had certainly studied in Spain. In the thirteenth, we have Michael Scot, Roger Bacon, and Grosseteste, all of whom were versed in Mahomedan science. Nothing, in fact, surprises us more than the extensive acquaintance of that celebrated friar with the Mahomedan commentators on Aristotle. His *Opus Majus* shows that he was as intimate with Albu-mazar, Averroes, Avicenna, Alfarabius, Thabeti ben Corah, Hali, Alhacen, Alkinali, Alfragan, Arzachel, and others, as with Aristotle himself.\*

It was in the metaphysical and scholastic philosophy that England most distinguished herself during the period under consideration. Johannes Scotus † had before shone in these abstruse enquiries. He, however, had been acquainted with Plato and Aristotle only: he had not known the subtle distinctions of the Arabian commentators. We may add, that his speculations were not based on facts or analogies: they were merely the discursive efforts of a mind which, though imaginative and acute, did not profit by the lessons of

\* Turner, *History of England*, vol. iv. Bacon, *Opus Majus*, passim.

† See Vol. II. p. 265. of this compendium.

experience. Widely different were the Arabs, who made facts the bases of their theories; who, though acute, and subtle, and imaginative as the disciples of the Stagyrite himself, knew that science consisted of successive accumulations. Lanfranc was the second great metaphysical ornament of this kingdom; of its scholastic philosophy he is the father. Anselm exceeded him. When Abelard and Hildebert arose, the new mode of combining the principles of Aristotle with the truths of Christianity, of adapting the reasonings of the schools to the demonstrations of the most recondite doctrines, especially of the divine existence and attributes, obtained incredible celebrity. But Abelard was no theologian; and in his hands science inevitably verged towards infidelity. To correct his views, — to train themselves in the severe discipline now required from every public teacher, — other eminent schoolmen arose. Peter the Lombard laudably endeavoured to show that faith is always consentaneous with reason. He was followed by a host of disputants, many of whom surpassed him, — Albertus Magnus, Alexander Hales, St. Thomas Aquinas, cardinal Buonaventura, friar Bacon, Ægidius de Colonna, Duns Scotus, Durand, William Occham, Walter Burley, and Raymund Lully, of whom the first six and the five last were respectively contemporaries, will be admired as long as intellectual splendour has any charms for men. The pompous epithets bestowed on them by their disciples — such as the great (Albert), the irrefragable (Hales), the angelic (Aquinas), the seraphic (St. Buonaventura), the wonderful (Bacon), the most profound (Ægidius), the most subtle (Duns Scotus), the most resolute (Durand), the invincible (Occham), the perspicuous (Burley), the most enlightened (Lully) — were well calculated to make an impression on the minds of students, and stimulate them to the attainment of the same distinction in the same path. The two Spaniards, however (Durand and Lully), are affirmed to have advanced many erroneous propositions. So popular in England did scholastic

studies become, — doubtless owing to the resort of our countrymen to the schools of Paris, — that all others were held in very inferior estimation. Whoever failed to cultivate them was dignified with the honourable epithet of the Arcadian ass, or even represented as more stupid than lead or stone. They were ridiculed and decried by John of Salisbury; yet the writings of that celebrated prelate prove that he was sufficiently acquainted with them: he must, therefore, be considered as condemning the abuse, rather than the legitimate province, of this philosophy. Perhaps, as this philosophy was cultivated with most success by the Dominican and Franciscan friars, — some of whom possessed the subtlest intellects the world has yet seen, — this was one reason of its condemnation by the secular clergy. But it deserved no condemnation. Misdirected as it sometimes was, the exercise of the faculties was a good, the value of which has never been sufficiently estimated. The works of our schoolmen are in number prodigious — nine, named *Richard*, commented on the Latin Sententiarum alone; but they rest in the dust of our libraries, and must soon be illegible — lost to the world for ever — unless some writer, of equal philosophy and erudition, arise to give us what we have so long wanted, — a complete literary history of England.\*

It was our intention in the present place — in fact, we had prepared materials for the purpose — to enter somewhat at length into the merits of Roger Bacon, whom we regard as the greatest of our philosophers during the period under consideration. But to estimate him as we ought, it would be necessary to see how far his system agrees with that of Aristotle, the Arabian commentators, Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and the other great doctors of

\* Tiraboschi, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, tom. iii. and iv. Brucher, Historia Critica Philosophiæ, period. ii. pars 2. lib. 2. Ceillier, Histoire des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques, passim. Nicolas Antonio, Bibliotheca Vetus, tom. ii. Turner, History of England, vol. iv. chap. 12. Among the most recent opponents of the scholastic philosophy, we perceive Mr. Turner. The whole tenor of his observations proves that he did not understand it. A few isolated extracts will afford no notion, or but a vicious notion, of it.

the church. To attempt such a thing in less than an ample volume would be falling into the very error we have always condemned. On looking at the materials we had collected, and the space left us, we are compelled to relinquish the design. We will not injure the memory of that great man, by presumptuously attempting to estimate him in a dozen pages. An analysis of friar Bacon's works would be neither more nor less than an analysis of European intellect during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.



## APPENDIX.

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### SAXON POEM ON ATHELSTAN'S VICTORY.

(From Warton's *History of English Poetry*, by Price. *Introduction to Vol. 1.*)

THE text of this poem has been formed from a collation of the Cotton MSS. Tiberius A. vi. B. i. B. iv. In the translation an attempt has been made to preserve the original idiom as nearly as possible without producing obscurity; and in every deviation from this rule, the literal meaning has been inserted within brackets. The words in parentheses are supplied for the purpose of making the narrative more connected, and have thus been separated from the context, that one of the leading features in the *style* of Anglo-Saxon poetry might be more apparent to the English reader. For the benefit of the Anglo-Saxon student, a close attention has been paid in rendering the grammatical inflections of the text, a practice almost wholly disused since the days of Hickeſ; but which cannot be too strongly recommended to every future translator from this language, whether of prose or verse. The extracts from Mr. Turner's and Mr. Ingram's versions cited in the notes, have been taken from the *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. ii. and the recent edition of the *Saxon Chronicle*. But those variations alone have been noticed which differed in *construction* from the present translation.

---

Æthelstán cyning,  
eorla drihten,  
beorna beáh-gyfa,  
and his bróther eac,  
Eadmund ætheling\*

Æthelstan (the) king,  
lord of earls,  
bracelet-giver of barons,  
and his brother eke,  
Eadmund (the) prince,

\* The reader must be cautioned against receiving this literal interpretation of the text in the same literal spirit. The terms *eorl* and *beorn* — man and bairn — are used with great latitude of meaning in Anglo-Saxon poetry; and though generally applied to persons of eminent rank or exalted courage, we have no proof of their appropriation as hereditary

ealdor langne-tir\*,  
geslogon at secce,

very illustrious chieftain,  
combated in [at] battle,

titles of distinction at the early period when this ode was composed. The word "ætheling"—strictly speaking, the son of the æthel or noble—appears to have gained an import in England nearly corresponding to our modern prince. In the Saxon Chronicle it is almost always, if not exclusively, confined to personages of the blood royal. Perhaps there is neither of these terms whose modern representative differs so essentially from its original as "ealdor." At the present day no idea of rank is attached to the word "elder," and none of authority except among some religious sects, and a few incorporated societies. In Anglo-Saxon poetry it rarely, if ever, occurs as marking seniority in point of age. Even the infant Edward is called an "elder of earls."

And feng his' earn  
syth-than to cyne-ricc;  
cyld unweaxen,  
eorla ealdor,  
tham was Eadweard nama.

And his bairn took  
after that to the kingdom;  
child unwaxen,  
elder of earls,  
to whom was Edward name.

\* Elder! a lasting glory, T. Elder, of ancient race, I. But "tir" is not used substantively in the present instance. "Ealdor langne-tir," or "Langne-tir ealdor," exhibits the same inverted construction as "flota fami-heals," ship foamy-necked; "ætheling ar-god," noble exceeding-good, &c. The present translation of "tir" is founded upon an etymology pointed out in the glossary to Saemund's Edda, where it is declared to be synonymous with the Danish "zyr," and the German "zier." In the Low German dialects, the z of the upper circles (which is compounded of t, s, like the Greek ζ of d, s) is almost always represented by t, and splendour, brightness, glory, &c. are certainly among the most prevalent ideas attached to "tir" when used as a substantive. If this interpretation be correct,—power, dominion, or victory, must be considered as only secondary meanings; and the compound adjectives "tir-mechtig" (exceeding mighty), "tir-fast" (exceeding fast or firm), "tir eadig" (exceeding blessed), evidently point to the first of these. There can be little doubt but the following passage of Beowulf preserves another compound of "tir":—

Swyce ic maga-thegnas,  
mine hate,  
with feonda gehwone,  
flotan cowerne,  
niw tyr-wyðne,  
nacan on sand,  
arum healdan.

And I will also  
order my fellow-thanes,  
against every foe,  
your vessel  
deep (and) exceeding wide,  
boat on the sand,  
carefully to hold.

"Niwe" is here equivalent to niwel; as in the expression, "niwe be nasse," low by the nose or promontory. "Tyr-wyðne nacan" is clearly synonymous with "sif-tathmed seap," the wide bosomed ship, occurring shortly afterwards. The learned editor's version, *pace obducta*, is founded on an expression still preserved in his native language. Icelandic, and of which Ibre has recorded the following example:—"Let han leggja eld i tyrd of gora bala scipno;" Jussit ignem tunc sibi pendunt, pyramque in nave struendam. "Arum," which the Latin version renders "remis," is used adverbially, like hwilum, gydlum, &c. The vessel lay upon the beach, and was afterwards moored: there could therefore be no use for her oars. The present version of "arum" is founded on the following passage, where Walthew says she has no doubt but Hrothulf will prove a kind protector to her children:

Thæt he tha geogotha wif,  
arum healdan,

That he the youths will,  
carefully protect hold. p. 90.

Arum (it. with cares, attentions,) is in the dative case plural.

|                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| sweorda ecgum,         | with edges of swords,        |
| yambe Brunanburh.      | near Brunanburh.             |
| Bord-weal clufon,      | (They) clove the board-wall, |
| heowon heatho-linda *, | hewed the high lindens,      |

\* They hewed the noble banners, T. And hewed their banners, I. In this interpretation of "lind" all our vocabularies agree. The translation of the text has been founded upon the following authorities. When Beowulf resolves to encounter the "fire-drake" who had laid waste his territory, he orders a "wig-bord," war-board (as it is called) of iron to be made; for we are told that,

|                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Wisse he gearwe,    | He knew readily,             |
| that him holt-wudu, | that him forest-wood,        |
| helpan ne meohte,   | might not help,              |
| lind with ligc.     | linden against fire. p. 175. |

And when Wiglaf prepares to join his lord in the combat, it is said of him,

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Hond-rond gefeng, | Hand-round he seized,      |
| Geolwe lindc.     | the yellow linden. p. 194. |

In the fragment of Judith, "lind" and "bord" are used in the same connection as in the present text :

|                       |                               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Stæpon heatho-rincas, | (The) lofty warriors stepped, |
| beornas to beadowe,   | bairns to (the) battle,       |
| bordum bedeakte,      | bedeckt (with) boards,        |
| hwealfum lincum.      | (with) concave lindens.       |

The following extract from the fragment of Brithnoth shows both terms to have been synonymous :—

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Leofsunu gemælde,  | Leofsunu spoke,         |
| and his lind ahof, | and hove up his linden, |
| bord to geberge.   | board for protection.   |

It may, however, be contended, that though "lind" in all these passages evidently means a shield; yet "heatho-lind," whose qualifying adjective seems rather an inappropriate epithet for a buckler, may have a different import. The following examples of a similar combination will remove even this objection :—

|                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ne hyrde ic cymlicor,   | Nor heard I of a comelier,    |
| ceol gegyrwan,          | keel (ship) prepared,         |
| hilde wapnum,           | (with) war weapons,           |
| and heatho-wædum,       | and high-weeds, (garments)    |
| billum and byrnum,      | with bills and burnies.       |
| Nemne him heatho-byrne, | Unless him (his) high-burnie, |
| helpe gefremede.        | with help had assisted.       |

Mr. Grimm found this expression in the Low-Saxon fragment of Hildebrand and Hathubrand, where, misled by the common interpretation of "lind-wiggende," vexilliferi, he has expended much ingenuity and learning in making a very simple narrative unnecessarily obscure.

|                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| hewun harmlicco,   | (they) hewed harm-like       |
| huitte scilti,     | (their) white shields,       |
| untî in ro lintun, | until to them their lindens, |
| luttilo wurtun.    | became little.               |

Mr. Grimm translates "lintun," gebende—bands or girdles.



|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| hamora lafum*,           | with relics of hammers (i. e. swords), |
| eáforan Eadweardes.      | (the) children of Edward.              |
| Swa him geæthele† wæs    | Such [so] was to them (their native)   |
| from cneo-mægum,         | from (their) ancestors, [nobility,     |
| thæt hie æt campe oft ‡, | that they in [at] battle oft,          |
| with lathra gehwæne,     | against every foe [loathed one],       |
| land ealgodon,           | (the) land preserved,                  |
| hord and hámas,          | hoard and homes,                       |
| hettend crungon.§        | (the) enemy crushed. [cringed, ac-     |
| Scotta leode,            | (The) Scottish people, [tively.        |

\* The survivors of the family, T. With the wrecks of their hammers, I. The only authority for the former interpretation is a meaning assigned to "hamora" in Lye's vocabulary. It will be sufficient to remark, that if there were any thing like probability to justify such a translation, we ought at least to read "With the survivors of the family;" as "lafum" stands in the ablative case plural. A similar expression occurs once in *Beowulf*, where we know from the context that neither of the versions cited above would suit the sense. The sword of Wiglaf has recently severed the dragon's body in two: with reference to which it is said,

Ac him irenna,  
 ega fornamon,  
 hearde heatho-scarde,  
 homera lafe,  
 thæt se wid-floga,  
 wundum stille,  
 hreas on hrusan,  
 hord-are neah.

But him iron,  
 edges seized,  
 the hard high-sherd,  
 the relic of hammers,  
 that the wide-fler,  
 still (quiet) with wounds,  
 fell on the earth,  
 hoard-hall near. p. 216.

In this poem "gomel-laf, eald-laf, yrfe-laf," are common expressions for a sword; and there can be little doubt but the language of the text is a metaphorical description of such a weapon. A similar phrase in Icelandic poetry would occasion no difficulty.

† As to them it was natural from their ancestors, T. So were they taught by kindred zeal, I. Ge-æthele is an ἀγαθὸς ἀγγελοῦς. The version of the text is founded on the following declaration of Ælfwine, a follower of Brithnoth:—

Ic will mine athelo,  
 eallum gecyðan,  
 thæt ic was on Myrcon,  
 micces cynnes.

I will my nobility,  
 manifest to all,  
 that I among Mercians was,  
 of a nuckle kin.

Mr. Ingram's translation of cneo-mægum—kindred zeal, is perfectly indefensible.

‡ That they in the field often, T. That they at camp often, I. Yet "camp-stede" is translated battle-place by Mr. Turner, and field of battle by Mr. Ingram. "Æt campe" would have been equally descriptive of a sea-fight. It has no connection with our modern camp, Fr., campus, Lat.

§ Pursuing they destroyed the Scottish people, T. Pursuing fell the Scottish clans, I. In these translations "hettend crungon" is separated from its context; and though it is a common practice of Anglo-Saxon poetry to unite, by the alliteration, lines wholly unconnected by the sense, yet in the present instance both are terminated by the same period. It may be questioned whether "hettan," *persequi*, has any existence beyond the pages of Lye, where it is inserted as the root of "hettend." There is reason to believe, that it was obsolete at a very early period, and that its participle present alone was retained in a substantive signification to

and scip-flotan,  
fæge feollon.\*  
Feld dennade †,

and the mariners  
fated fell.  
• The field ———

denote an enemy or pursuing one. When the verb was required, it would seem to have been used without the aspirate :

Ehtende wees,  
deorc death scua,  
dugothē and geogothē.

Pursuing was  
(the) dark death shadow,  
old (ad lit. *valentes*) and young.  
Beowulf, p. 14.

At all events, the examples recorded by Lye only exhibit the substantive *hettend*, to which the following may be added : —

Gif ic thæt gefricge,  
ofer floda-begang,  
thæt thee ymbsittende,  
egesān thywath,  
swa thee hettende,  
hwylum dydon.

If I that hear,  
over the floods-gang,  
that thee, the round-sitting ones,  
oppress with terror,  
so (as) thee enemies,  
(ere) while did. Beowulf, p. 138.

Syth-than hie gefriegceath,  
freaun userne,  
ealdor-lease ;  
thone the ær geheold,  
with hettendum,  
hord and rice.

After that they hear  
our sovereign (to be)  
life-less ;  
he who ere held,  
against (our) foes,  
hoard and kingdom. Ib. p. 222.

Mr. Ingram's translation is obviously incorrect. The whole context proves the Scots to have been the yielding party, and consequently they were the pursued, not those pursuing; and if, with Mr. Turner, we apply "pursuing" to the victors, Athelstan and Edward, the participle (as it then would be) ought to stand in the nominative case plural — *hettende* — and not in the accusative singular.

\* They fell dead, T. In numbers fell, I. This expression occurs again below, "fæge to feohte," where Mr. Ingram expounds it, the *hardy* fight. It seems almost superfluous to add, that one of these interpretations must be erroneous; and it will be shown immediately that neither is correct. Mr. Turner with more consistency translates the second example "for deadly fight;" making "fæge" an adjective agreeing with "feohte," and consequently like its substantive governed by the preposition "to." But independently of the impossibility to produce an example, where any Anglo-Saxon preposition exhibits this twofold power, — a retroactive and prospective regimen, — the dative singular and plural of "fæge" would be either "fægum" or "fægan," accordingly as it was used with the definite or indefinite article. In the languages of the North, "fæge," however written, means *fated to die*; or, to use the interpretation of the Glossary to Samund's Edla, *mortū jam destinatus, brevi moriturus*. This is the only version equally suited to both examples in the present text; and it might be supported by numerous instances from *Cædmon* and *Beowulf*. A confirmation of its general import may also be drawn from the use of "unfæge" in the latter poem.

Wyrd oft nereth,  
unfægne eorl,  
thonne his ellen deah.

Fate oft preserveth,  
a man not fated to die,  
when his courage is good for aught.  
Beowulf, p. 45.

† The Cotton MS. Tiberius B. iv. reads "dennode;" Tiberius A. vi. and B. i. read "dennade," which is supported by the Cambridge MS. For this unusual expression no satisfactory meaning has been found; and it is left to the ingenuity and better fortune of some future translator. Mr.

|                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| seega swate*,                 | with warriors' blood,        |
| sith-than sunne úp,           | since the sun up,            |
| on morgen-tíd,                | on morrow-tide,              |
| mære tuncgol,                 | mighty planet,               |
| glád ofer grundas †,          | glided over grounds,         |
| Godes candel beorht,          | bright candle of God,        |
| éces Drihtnes ; *             | of the eternal Lord ;        |
| oth-thæt sio æthele gesceaft, | till the noble creature,     |
| sáh to setle. ‡               | sank to (her) seat [settle]. |

Turner and Mr. Ingram, who render this line — the field resounded, mid the din of the field — have followed a reading recorded by Gibson, "dynode," — and which, notwithstanding the collective authority of four excellent manuscripts in favour of the present text, is possibly correct. In this case, however, "dynode" must not be interpreted in a literal sense, but considered as synonymous with the Icelandic "dundi," from "dynia," resonare, *irruere*. "Blodid dundi [dynode] og tarin tid," Creberrima erat stillatio tum sanguinis, tum lacrymarum. "Hridin dynr yfir," — procella cum strepitu irruit.

\* The warriors swate, T. The warrior swate, I. To justify these translations we ought to read either, "seegas switon" or "seeg swat." The latter, which offers least violence to the text, is clearly impossible, since no line of Anglo-Saxon poetry can have less than four syllables. There is, however, no necessity for changing a single letter of the text, as "swate" is the dat. case sing. of "swát," *blood*, and "seega," the gen. plural of "seeg." It may be safely asserted that "swát" in Anglo-Saxon poetry never means "sweat" in its modern acceptation.

|                       |                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Thá thæt sword ongan, | Then that sword began,               |
| æfter heatho-swate,   | after the mighty blood,              |
| hilde gicelum,        | with battle-droppings,               |
| wig-bil wanian.       | war-bill (to, wauc. Beowulf, p. 121. |

|                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Swa thæt blod gesprang, | So that blood sprang,        |
| hætest heatho-swát.     | hottest mighty gore. p. 126. |

|                      |                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Wolf Wonreding,      | Wolf the son of Wonred,              |
| wæpne gerahte,       | reached (him) with weapon,           |
| thæt him for swenge. | that to him for the swinge (blow)    |
| swát ædrum sprang.   | blood from the veins sprang. p. 220. |

The German "schweiss" (sweat) still means the *blood* of a wild boar.

† Glad, T. and I. Blét "glád" is the past tense of glidan, to glide; and formed like rád from ridan, bád from bidan, &c. in all of which the accentuated *a* was pronounced like *o* in rode. It is the glode of "Le Bone Florence of Rome."

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Thorow the foreste the lady rode,   |
| All glemed there sche glode,        |
| Till sche came in a felde. v. 1719. |

In sir Launfal, Mr. Ritson leaves it unexplained.

|  |
|--|
| Another cours together they ród,       |
| That syr Launfal helm of-glód. v. 574. |

Unless we admit this interpretation of "glád," the first part of the proposition will be a mere string of predicates without a verb. The antithesis to "glád ofer grundas" is "sah to setle."

‡ Hastened to her setting, T. Sat in the western main, I. Sah is the past tense of sigan, to incline, sink down; and follows the same norm, as stah, from stigan; hnah, from hngan, &c.

Thær læg secg monig,  
 gárum ageted,  
 guman northerne,  
 ofer scyld scoten.  
 Swyle Scyttisc eac,  
 werig wiges sæd.\*  
 West-Seaxe forth,  
 ondrangne dæg,  
 eorod-cystum †,  
 on last lægdon,  
 lathum theodum.  
 Heowun here-flyman,  
 hindan thearle ‡,  
 mecum mylen-scearpum. §  
 Myrce ne wyrndon,  
 heardes hand-plegan,  
 hæletha nanum,  
 thára the mid Anlafe,  
 ofer ear-geblond,  
 on lides bosme,  
 land gesohton,

There lay many a warrior,  
 strewed by darts,  
 northern man,  
 shot over (the) shield.  
 So Scottish eke,  
 weary of war —  
 The West-Saxons forth,  
 the continuous day,  
 in battalions,  
 laid on the footsteps,  
 to the loathed race.  
 (They) hewed (the) fugitives,  
 hindwards exceedingly,  
 with swords mall-sharp.  
 The Mercians refused not,  
 of the hard hand-play,  
 to none of the men,  
 of those who with Anlaf,  
 over the ocean,  
 in [on] the ship's bosom,  
 sought (our) land,

\* Weary with ruddy battle, T. The mighty seed of Mars, I. In the first of these versions the reading of the Cotton MS. Tiberius B. iv. has been followed: "werig wiges ræd." This manuscript, however, exhibits great marks of negligence on the part of the transcriber, and, if correct in its orthography on the present occasion, is equally obscure with the language of the other copies. "Ræd" cannot be the adjective red, as this would give us a false concord. If "sæd" be the genuine reading, it would be difficult to point out a better authenticated version than Mr. Ingram's, provided the word is to be taken substantively. But even this has been rejected, from a feeling that the context requires a verb, and a doubt whether such a metaphor be in unison with the general spirit of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

† With a chosen band, T. With chosen troops, I. The Anglo-Saxon "cysta," though clearly derived from "ceosan," to choose, appears to have obtained a specific meaning somewhat similar to our regiment or battalion.

Hæfde cista gehwile,  
 euthes werodes,  
 gar-berendra,  
 guth-fremmendra,  
 tyn hund geteled.

Had each cista,  
 of approved troops,  
 of spear-bearing,  
 of war-enacting (ones)  
 ten hundred taled (numbered).  
 Cædmon, 67. 25.

‡ The behind ones fiercely, T. Scattered the rear, I. But "hindan" possesses the same adverbial power as "eastan" occurring below.

§ This reading has been retained on the authority of the Cotton MSS. Tiberius A. vi. B. i. The reasons for such an epithet are not so clear, however obvious this would be if applied to modern times. But with our present limited knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon language, and of the arts, customs, and modes of thinking of our ancestors, it would be highly absurd to reject an expression, merely because its propriety is not felt. The more intelligible reading "mycel scearpum" wears all the appearance of a gloss.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| fæge to feohte.    | fated to the fight.                    |
| Fife lægon,        | Five lay,                              |
| on thám cæmpstede, | on the battle-stead,                   |
| cýningas geonge,   | young kings,                           |
| sweordum aswefede. | soothed [slumbered, <i>act.</i> ] with |
| Swylc seofen éac,  | So seven eke,                          |
| eorlas Anlafes ;   | earls of Anlaf's ;                     |
| unrím heriges* ,   | numberless of the army,                |

\* And innumerable of the army of the fleet—and the Scots. There was chased away, the lord of the Northmen, by necessity driven to the voice of the ship. With a small host, with the crew of his ship, the king of the fleet departed on the yellow flood, T. And of the ship's crew unnumbered crowds. There was dispersed the little band of hardy Scots, the dread of the Northern hordes urged to the noisy deep by unrelenting fate. The king of the fleet with his slender craft escaped with his life on the felon flood, I. The present translation differs occasionally from both these versions. Where it agrees with either, no vindication will be necessary; but some of its variations are too important not to require an account of the authorities from whence they are derived.—The Anglo-Saxon "flota" (the floater) equally meant a ship and a sailor.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Flota was on ythum,<br>bát under beorge. | Ship was on the waters,<br>boat under rock. Beowulf, p. 18. |
|--|---|

Of its secondary meaning, a sailor,—an example has already occurred in the compound, "scip-flota;" and the fragment of Brithnoth has preserved the simple substantive, as in the present text:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Se flod ut-gewat,<br>thá flotán stodon gearowe,<br>wicinga fela,<br>wiges gearne. | The flood departed out,<br>the sailors stood prepared<br>of the vikings many,<br>desirous of battle. |
|---|--|

"Stefn" like "flota" had also a twofold meaning. Lye has only recorded one of these—the human voice,—and upon this both the interpretations cited above are evidently founded. But it likewise implied, the prow of a ship; and this is the only sense which will give connection or intelligence to the present narrative. A similar example occurs in Beowulf:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Flota was on ythum,<br>bát under beorge,<br>beornas gearwe f<br>on stefn stigon. | Ship was on the waters,<br>boat under rock,<br>(the) bairns readily<br>ascended the prow. |
|--|---|

In German, "stevn" still means the stem of a ship; and in Danish this part of a vessel is called the For-stæv, by way of distinction from the Bag-stæv, or stern. It will also be found in the second part of the Edda:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Brim-runar scaltu rista,<br>ef thu wilt borgit hafa,<br>a sundi segl-maurom ;<br>a stafni thær scalt rista,<br>oc a starnar-blathe,<br>oc leggja eld i ár. | Sea-runes shalt thou carve,<br>if thou wilt have protected,<br>sail-horses (ships) in the sea ;<br>in the prow shalt (thou) carve<br>and in the stern-blade, (rudder)<br>and lay fire in the oar. |
|--|---|

But "stefn" must not be confounded with "stefna," a ship, frequently occurring in Beowulf, and which the Latin translation always (I believe) renders "prora."

|                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| flotan and Sceotta.       | of sailors and Scots.              |
| Thær geflymed wearth,     | There was chased away,             |
| Northmanna bregu,         | the leader of the Northmen, (i. e. |
| nyde gebæded,             | compelled by need, [Anlaf.]        |
| to lides stefne,          | to the ship's prow,                |
| litle wercede.            | with a little band.                |
| Cread cnear on-flot,      | (The) ship drove [crowded] afloat, |
| cyning ut-gewat,          | (the) king departed out,           |
| on fealone flod,          | on the fallow flood,               |
| feorh generede.           | preserved (his) life.              |
| Swylc thær éac se froda*, | So there also the sapient one,     |
| mid fleame cóm,           | by flight came,                    |
| on his cyththe north,     | on his country north,              |
| Constantinus,             | Constantine, •                     |
| har hylderinc. †          | hoary warrior.                     |

Gewát tha ofer wæg-holm,  
winde gefysed,  
flota fāmi-heals,  
fugle gelicost.  
Oth-thæt umb án tid,  
otheres dogores,  
wunden stefne,  
gewaden hæfde,  
thæt thá lithende,  
land gesáwon.

Departed then over (the) billowy main  
hastened by the wind,  
the foamy-necked ship,  
likest to a fowl.  
Till that about six o'clock,  
of the other (next) day,  
the curved bark,  
had (so) waded,  
that the voyagers,  
saw land.

p. 19.

\* The routed one, T. The valiant chief, I. By which of these epithets are we to translate the title bestowed upon Sæmund, for his extraordinary learning? — Sæmundr hinn *frodi*. The age of Constantine procured for him this distinction, which in *Beowulf* is so frequently applied to the veteran Hrothgar.

† The hoarse din of Hilda, T. The hoary Hildrinc,\* I. It is quite an assumption of modern writers, that this goddess of war was acknowledged by the Anglo-Saxons; and no ingenuity can reconcile Mr. Turner's translation with the Anglo-Saxon text. Mr. Ingram most unnecessarily makes "hylderinc" a proper name, which, if correct on the present occasion, would be equally so in the following passage, where *Beowulf* plunges into the "mere" to seek the residence of Grendel's mother:

Brim-wylm onfeng,  
hilderince :

Sea-wave received,  
(the) warrior :

or in the preamble to Brithnoth's dying address :

Tha gyt that word gecwæth,  
hár hilderinc.

Then yet the word quoth,  
(the) hoary warrior.

With these examples before us, there can be little doubt but that we ought to insert "rinc" in the following extract relating to the funeral obsequies of *Beowulf*:

Tha wæs wunden gold,  
on wæn hladen,  
aghwas unrim,  
æthelinge boren,  
hár hilde [rinc]  
to Hrones-nasse.

Then was the twisted gold,  
on wain laden,  
numberless of each,  
with the atheling borne,  
hoary warrior,  
to Hron's-ness.

p. 22.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Hreman ne thórfte,<br>meca gemanan.*  | He needed not to boast,<br>of the commerce of swords.   |
| Her wæs his maga-sceard †,<br>freonda gefylled,<br>on folc-stede,<br>beslægen æt secce ;<br>and his sunu (he) forlet,<br>on wæl-stowe,<br>wundum-forgrunden,<br>geongne æt guthe.<br>Gylpan ne thórfte,<br>beorn blanden-feax ‡,<br>bill-geslehtes,<br>eald inwitta § ; | Here was his kindred troop,<br>of friends destroyed (felled),<br>on the folk-stead,<br>slain in [at] battle ;<br>and his son he left,<br>on the slaughter-place,<br>mangled with wounds,<br>young in [at] the fight.<br>He needed not to boast,<br>bairn blended-haired,<br>of the bill-clashing,<br>old deceiver ; |

\* Mr. Ingram, who reads "mæcan gemanan," translates it, "among his kindred." But "mæca," if it exist at all as a nominative case, can never mean "a relative."

† He was the fragment of his relations, of his friends felled in the folk-place, T. Here was his remnant of relations and friends slain with the sword in the crowded fight, I. It is difficult to conceive upon what principle the soldiers of Constantine, who fell in the battle, could be called either the fragment or remnant of his followers. A similar expression—here-laf—is afterwards applied with evident propriety to the survivors of the conflict. The present translation has been hazarded, from a belief that "sceard" is synonymous with "scare" (the German *schaar*, a band or troop); and "maga-sceard," like "magodriht," descriptive of the personal or household troops of Constantine.

Tha wæs Hrothgare,  
here-sped gyfen,  
wiges weorth-mynd ;  
thæt him his wine-magas,  
georne hyrdon,—  
oth thæt seo geogoth geweox  
-mago-driht micel.

Then was to Hrothgar,  
army-success given,  
honour of war ;  
thæt him his friendly-relatives,  
willingly heard (obeyed) —  
till the youth waxed (in years) —  
mickle kindred band. p. 7.

‡ The lad with flaxen hair, T. The fair-haired youth, I. Mr. Turner appears to refer these expressions to Constantine's son; Mr. Ingram certainly does. There would be little propriety in declaring a dead man's inability to boast, or the unfitness of such a proceeding, even if there were any thing to colour such an interpretation. But *blonden-feax* is a phrase which in Anglo-Saxon poetry is only applied to those advanced in life; and is used to denote that *mixture* of colour, which the hair assumes on approaching or increasing senility. The German "blond," at the present day, marks a colour neither white nor brown, but mingled with tints of each.

§ The old in wit, T. Nor old Inwood, I. The orthography of the present text is supported by the Cotton MSS. Tiberius A. vi and B. i. Mr. Ingram reads "inwidda," of which he has made "Inwood;" though the learned translator has omitted to inform us who this venerable personage might be. It is rather singular that he should appear again, with no slight ubiquity of person, in the fragment of Judith :

Swa se inwidda,  
ofer ealne dæg,  
driht-guman sine,  
drenete mid wine.

So the deceiver,  
over the whole day  
his followers,  
drenched with wine.

|                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ne Anlaf thy má,           | nor Anlaf any more,                  |
| mid heora here-lafum,      | with the relics of their armies,     |
| hlihan ne thorfton,        | needed not to laugh,                 |
| thæt hí beadu-weorca*,     | that they of warlike works,          |
| beteran wurdon,            | better (men) were,                   |
| on camp-stede,             | on the battle-stead,                 |
| cumbol-gehnastes,          | at [of] the conflict of banners,     |
| gár mittinge †,            | the meeting of spears,               |
| gumena gemotes,            | the assembly of men,                 |
| wæpen-gewrixles,           | the interchange of weapons,          |
| thæs the híc on wæl-felda, | of that which they on the slaughter- |
| with Eadweardes,           | with Edward's, [field,               |
| eáforan plegodon.          | children played.‡                    |
| Gewítan hym tha Northmen,  | The Northmen departed,               |
| nægledon enearrum,         | (in their) nailed ships,             |
| dreorig daretha láf ‡,     | gory relic of the darts,             |
| on dinges § mere   ,       | on,———                               |
| ofer deop wæter,           | over deep water,                     |

\* That they for works of battle were, T. That they on the field of *stern command* better workmen were, I. But "beadu-weorca" is the genitive case plural of "beadu-weorc," and to justify these translations ought to have been "beadu-weorcum" (I.) or "beadu-wyrhtan" (I.).

† Mr Ingram reads "mitting's," which can only owe its existence to the negligence of a transcriber. The genitive case of "mitting" is "mittinge."

‡ Dreary relics of the darts, T. Dreary remnant, I. This expression seems rather to refer to the *wounded* condition of the fugitives. The present version may be justified by the following extracts from *Beowulf*:—

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Thonne was theos meoðo-heal,<br>driht-scle dreor-fah,<br>thonne dæg lixte,<br>eal benc-thelu,<br>blode bestymed. | Then was this mead-hall,<br>troop-hall gore stained,<br>when day lighted (dawned),<br>all (the) table,<br>sprinkled with blood. p. 39. |
| Thonne blode-fah,<br>husa selest,<br>heoro-dæcorig stod.   | Then stained with blood,<br>the best of houses,<br>stood sword-gory. p. 72.  |
| Wæter under wolcnum,<br>wæl-dreore fah.  | Water under clouds,<br>stained with slaughter-gore. p. 123.  |

§ This reading has been retained in preference to the "dinnes" of Gibson, on the authority of Tiberius B. i. The other Cotton MSS. read "dynges," A. vi. "dynges," B. iv.

|| On the stormy sea, T. On the roaring sea, I. There is every probability that these translations give the sense of this passage, though some doubts may be entertained as to the integrity of the present text. If "dynges-mere" be the genuine reading, it must be considered as a parallel phrase with "wiges-heard, hordes-heard," &c. where two substantives are united in one word, the former of which stands in the genitive case with an *adjective* power. Of this practice the examples are too numerous and



Dyflin secan,  
eft Yraland\*,  
æwisc-mode.  
Swylce thá gebrother  
begen æt samne,  
cyning and ætheling,  
cyththe sohton,  
West-Seaxna land,  
wiges hremige. †  
Læton him behindan,  
hrá brittian,

Dublin to seek,  
Ireland again,  
with a shamed mind.  
So too the brothers,  
both together,  
king and prince,  
sought (their) country,  
land of the West Saxons,  
of (the) war exulting.  
(They) left behind them,  
(the) corse to enjoy.

too notorious to require further illustration. "Dinges-*mere*" would then be a "kenningar *nafn*" given to the ocean from the continual clashing of its waves. For it will be remembered that the literal import of "*mere*" is a mere or *lake*, and this could not be applied to the Irish Channel, without some qualifying expression. It is clearly impossible that "dinges," if correct, can stand alone, as "on" never governs a genitive case. On "thone mere," on "thæne mere." See *Lye* in voce.

\* Mr. Ingram retains "heora land" in the text, and translates the variation — Yraland. All the Cotton MSS. unite in reading "eft;" and we learn from other sources that this statement is historically correct.

† The screamers of war, T. In fight triumphant, l. It has already been said of the fugitive Constantine, that *he* had no cause to exult — hreman ne thórite; this is left to the victors. This expression occurs repeatedly in *Beowulf*, where it is always applied to the successful party:

Thanon eft gewát,  
huthc hremig,  
to ham faran,  
mid thære wæl-fylle,  
wica neosan.

Thence (*Grendel*) again departed,  
with prey exulting,  
to home (to) go,  
with the slaughtered-slain,  
to approach (his dwelling). p. 12.

Guth-rine gold-wlanc,  
gras-moldan træd,  
since hremig.

Warrior (*Beowulf*) bright in gold,  
grass-mould trode,  
with wealth exulting. p. 141.

Nu her thára banena,  
byrc nat hwylces,  
frætwtum hremig,  
on flet gæth;  
morthres gylpeth,  
and thone maththum<sup>1</sup> byreth,  
thone the thu mid rihte,  
rædan sceoldest.

Now of those banes (murderers'),  
(the) son (I) know not of which,  
with ornaments exulting,  
in (the) hall goeth;  
boasteth of the murder,  
and the jewel (i.e. a sword) beareth,  
that thou by right,  
shouldest command (or wield).

p. 154.

<sup>1</sup> Maththum must not be confounded with mathmum, the dative case plural of mathm.

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| salowig padan *,          | (the) sallowy ———,          |
| thone sweartan hræfn,     | (the) swarth raven,         |
| hyrned-nebban ;           | the horned nibbed one ;     |
| and thone hascan padan †, | and the dusky ———,          |
| earn æftan hwit‡,         | eagle white behind [after], |

\* The dismal kite, T. The sallow kite, I. Whatever idea may have been attached to "padan," it is manifestly not a species but a genus. It occurs again immediately as characteristic of the eagle. There is, however, reason to believe that these lines have been transposed, and that we ought to read

Thone sweartan hræfn,      •  
salowig padan.      •

Cædmon unites with the present text in calling the raven both "swarth and sallow."

|   |  |        |
|---|--|--------|
| Let tha ymb worn daga<br>sweartne fleogan,<br>hræfn ofer heah flod.<br>Noe tealde,<br>that he on neode hine<br>secan wolde ;<br>ac se feond,<br>salwig fethera,<br>secan nolde. | Then after some days (he) let<br>swarth fly,<br>raven over high flood.<br>Noah reckoned (told)<br>that he from need him<br>seek would ;<br>but the fiend, ~<br>sallowy of feathers,<br>would not seek (him). | 33. 5. |
|---|--|--------|

It will be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon "blac" was equivalent to our black and yellow.

† And the hoarse toad, T. And the hoarse vulture, I. The latter version is totally without authority. The former is justified in part by our vocabularies, though evidently at variance with the context. The Cotton MS. Tiberius A. vi. reads haso (the nom. case), which shows this word to have had a twofold termination: haso and haswe — like *sælo* and *salwe*, *fealo* and *fealwe*. The nomenclature of Anglo-Saxon colours must necessarily be very obscure; but as we find the public road called "fealwe stræte" (Beowulf); and the passage made for the Israelites over the Red Sea "haswe strada" (Cædmon), the version of the present text cannot be materially out.

‡ The eagle afterwards to feast on the white flesh, T. And the eagle swift to consume his prey, I. The very simplicity of the Anglo-Saxon text appears to have excited distrust in the only translation these words are susceptible of. The ornithologist will perceive in it a description of the *Haliæetus albicilla*, or white-tailed sea-eagle. The phrase is not without a parallel in Beowulf, where the bard is describing the ashen lances with their steel-clad points:

|  |   |        |
|--|---|--------|
| Garás stodon,<br>sæmanna searo,<br>samod æt gædere,<br>asç holt ufan græg. | The spears stood,<br>weapons of the searpen,<br>collected together,<br>ash-wood gray above. | p. 27. |
|--|---|--------|

There is so close a resemblance between the present text and a passage in the fragment of Judith, that it will not be too much to assume that they have been drawn from some common source, or that the one has had its influence in producing the other:

æses brucan,  
 grædigne guth-hafoc ;  
 and thæt græge deor,  
 wulf on wealde.  
 Ne wearth wæl máre,  
 on thys igland,  
 æfre gyta,  
 folces gefylled,  
 beforan thissum,  
 sweordes ecgum,  
 thæs the us secgath béc,  
 calde utlwitan,  
 sith-than eastan hider,  
 Engle and Seaxe,  
 ùp becomon,  
 ofer brade brimu\*  
 Brytene sohton,  
 wlance wig-smithas,  
 Wealas † ofer-comon,

of the corse to enjoy,  
 greedy war-hawk ;  
 and that gray beast [deer],  
 (the) wolf on the wold.  
 Nor was (there) a greater slaughter,  
 on this island,  
 ever yet,  
 of folk felled,  
 before this,  
 by (the) sword's edges,  
 of that that say to us (in) books,  
 oïd historians,  
 since eastward hither,  
 Angles and Saxons,  
 up came,  
 over (the) broad seas,  
 Britain sought,  
 splendid war-smiths,  
 overcame (the) Welsh,

Thas se blanca gefeah,  
 wulf in walde,  
 and se wanna hrefn,  
 wæl-gifre fugel,  
 westan begen,  
 thæt him tha theod-guman,  
 thohton tilian,  
 fylle on fægum.  
 Ac him fleah on laste,  
 earn ætes georn,  
 urig fethera,  
 salowig pada,  
 sang hilde leoth,  
 hyrned nebba.

Of this rejoiced the lank,  
 wolf in the wold ;  
 and the wan raven,  
 slaughter-desiring fowl,  
 westward both,  
 that to them the people,  
 thought to prepare,  
 a falling among the fated.  
 But on their footsteps flew,  
 eagle of food desirous,  
 dewy (?) of feathers,  
 sallowy —,  
 sang the war song,  
 horned nibbed one.

\* Mr. Ingram reads "brimum brade," which is a false concord. All the Cotton MSS. agree in the reading of the present text.

† As this name is foreign to the Celtic dialects, it probably was conferred upon the inhabitants by their Teutonic neighbours. In old German poetry every thing translated from a foreign language was said to be taken from the Wälsche (Welsh), and the Pays de Vaud is still called the Wallserland. The following singular passage is taken from Hartmann von Awe's romance of Iwain (and Gawain), where Welsch indisputably means English :

Er was Hartman genant,  
 and was ain Awere,  
 der bracht dise mere,  
 zu Tisch als ich han vernommen,  
 do er usz Engellandt was commen,  
 da er vil zit was gewesen,  
 hat ers an den Welschen buchen  
 gelesen.

He was named Hartman,  
 and was an Auwer,  
 who brought this tale,  
 into German as I have heard,  
 after he came out of England,  
 where he had been a long time,  
 (and where) he had read it in the  
 Welsh books

eorlas árhwáte\*,  
eard begeaton.

earls exceeding bold [keen],  
obtained (the) earth.

\* The earls excelling in honour, T. Most valiant earls, I. In Anglo-Saxon "hwate" and "eene" are synonymous, meaning both keen and bold. It is usual to consider "arhwate" and many other similar expressions as compounded of "ar," honour; an error which has arisen from not sufficiently attending to the distinction between the substantive and the preposition "ar." In such combinations as "ar-wurthe," "ar-fast," "ar-hwate," "ar-god," the preposition is prefixed in the sense of excess, as in the comparative degree of adjectives it is subjoined. "Ar-wurthe," venerable, is from "ar-wurthian," to esteem greatly; and the following passage from *Beowulf* exhibits one of the combinations above cited, in a sense which cannot be mistaken.

Swylc scolde eorl,  
wesan ar-god,  
wylc Æschere was.

• So should earl  
be exceeding good,  
so as Æscher was. p. 101.

The most simple and perhaps original idea attached to this preposition (of such extensive use in all the dialects of the North) was priority, from whence by an easy transition it came to mean priority in point of magnitude, and thence in point of excellence (honour). The analogous expressions prime good, prime strong, prime ripe, &c., may be heard in every province. The compounds "arfull," propitious, "ar-leas," impious, are formed from the substantive "ár," a word of very extensive signification and which may be rendered goodness, kindness, benefit, care, favour, &c.

Thá spræc guth-cyning,  
Sodoma aldor,  
secgum gefylled,  
to Abrahame;  
him was ara thearf

Then spoke the war-king,  
prince of Sodom,  
whose warriors were felled,  
to Abraham;  
to him was need of kindnesses.  
Cædmon, 46. 2.

It is impossible to translate "secgum afylled" literally, without causing obscurity.

Æla frea beorhte,  
folces scyppend,  
gemise thin mod,  
me to gode,  
sile thyne are,  
thyne earminge.

O bright Lord  
creator of (the) folk  
soften thy mind,  
me to good,  
grant thy favour,  
thy commiseration.  
Cotton Prayers, Jul. A. 2.

Fægre acende —  
beornum to frofre,  
callum to are,  
ylda bearnum.

Fair bought forth —  
for hairns' consolation,  
for the benefit of all  
sons of men. Jul. A. 2.

Here, too, the dative cases plural cannot be translated. This term is of frequent occurrence in old English poetry, where the context having supplied the meaning, the glossographers had only to contend about the etymon.

Lybeaus thurstedde sore  
And sayde Maugys thyn ore.

Lyb. Dis. v. 1537.

The maister fel adoun on kne, and criede mercy and ore.

R. of Gloucester, p. 9.

Y aske mercy for Goddys ore.

Erl of Tholous. v. 583.

The meaning of "ore," when contrasted with the preceding extracts, will be too obvious to require any comment. The substitution of o for á was evidently the work of the Normans. The Anglo-Saxon á was pronounced like the Danish aa, the Swedish å, or our modern o in more, fore, &c. The strong intonation given to the words in which it occurred would strike a Norman ear as indicating the same orthography that marked the long syllables of his native tongue, and he would accordingly write them with an e final. It is from this cause that we find hár, sár, hát, bát, wá, án, bán, stán, &c. written hore (hoar), sore, hote (hot), bote (boat), woe, one, bone, stone, some of which have been retained. The same principle of elongation was extended to all the Anglo-Saxon vowels that were accented; such as réc, reke (reek), lif, life, gód, gode (good), scúr, shure (shower); and hence the majority of those e's mute upon which Mr. Tyrwhitt has expended so much unfounded speculation.

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