

CHRONOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE.		LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEADING DIALECTS.			
Divisions.	Subdivisions.	Dates.	Northern English.	Midland English.	Southern English.
OLD ENGLISH (Full Inflexions.)	OLD ENGLISH OF ANGLO-SAXON.	500	Old Anglian.		Old Saxon and Kentish.
		600			(<i>Laws of Ethelbert</i> , 600.)
		700	Cædmon, 660. Cynewulf? Beda, 724.		(<i>Laws of Ine</i> , 700.) <i>Epinal Glossary</i> ?
OLD ENGLISH TRANSITION (SEMI-SAXON.)		800	Old Northumbrian.		Literary West-Saxon or Anglo-Saxon.
		900		Old Mercian.	Alfred, 885.
		1000	Durham Glosses, 950-975.	Rushworth Gloss, ? 975-1000.	<i>Rhymes in Saxon Chron.</i> , 937-979. Elfric, 1000. Wulfstan, 1016. Worcester Chronicle, 1042-79.
MIDDLE ENGLISH (Levelled Inflexions.)	EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH, (EARLY ENGLISH.)	1100			
		1200	Early Northern English.	Early English.	Early Southern English.
		1300	<i>Cursor Mundi</i> .		
MIDDLE ENGLISH TRANSITION.	LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH.	1400	Hampole, 1350. Barbour, 1375.	Wycliffe, Chaucer.	
		1485	Wyntoun, 1420.		
		1500	Dunbar, 1500. Lyndesay.	Tyndal, 1525.	
MODERN ENGLISH (Lost Inflexions.)	EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TUDOR ENGLISH.	1500			
		1611	James VI., 1590.	Shakespeare, 1590-1618.	(<i>Edgar in Lear</i> .)
		1700	Allan Ramsay, 1717.	Milton, 1626-71. Dryden, 1663-1700. Addison, 1717. Johnson, 1750.	
MODERN ENGLISH.		1800	Burns, 1790. Scott.	Coleridge, 1805. Macaulay. Tennyson.	<i>Ezmoor Scolding</i> , 1746. Barnes, 1844.

The three vertical lines represent the three leading forms of English, Northern, Midland, and Southern, and the names occurring down the course of each are those of writers and works in that form of English at the given date. The thickness of the line shows the comparative literary position of this form of speech at the time, thick indicating a literary language, medium a literary dialect, thin a popular dialect or patois; a dotted line shows that this period is unrepresented by specimens. The horizontal lines divide the periods; these (after the first two) refer mainly to the Midland English; in inflexional decay the Northern English was at least a century in advance of the Midland, and the Southern nearly as much behind it. (J. A. H. M.)

ENGLISH LITERATURE

I. *Anglo-Saxon Period, 596-1066.*—The early history of literature in England might lend some countenance to the theory that the development of a nation's literature is, at bottom, but a chapter of its religious history. While the religion of our fathers was in the main a rude awe-struck worship of the forces of nature, literature either had no existence for them, or was in a state not less elementary, consisting of a few songs and oracles, and nothing more. With the advent of the religion of Christ—the only faith which at once recognizes the original dignity of human nature and repairs its fall—came an intellectual as well as a spiritual awakening to the Teutonic nations—for into such the original tribes or clans of the invaders had now grown—that were planted in the old provinces of Roman Britain. Fortified by gospel precept for the present life, and thrilled with the hope of the life to come, the Saxon mind, released from disquietude, felt free to range discursively through such regions of human knowledge as its teachers opened before it, and the Saxon heart was fain to pour out many a rude but vigorous song. Pope Gregory himself, who, according to the old phraseology, sent baptism to the English, is said indeed to have spoken disparagingly of human learning. But the missionaries could not fail to bring with them from Rome the intellectual culture of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, so far as it had survived the fall of the Western empire and the irruption of the barbarians. The Roman alphabet, paper or parchment, and pen and ink, drove out the Northern runes, the beechen tablet, and the scratching implement. The necessity of the preservation, and at least partial translation, of the Scriptures, the varied exigencies of the Catholic ritual, the demand for so much knowledge of astronomy as would enable the clergy to fix beforehand the date of Easter, all favoured, or rather compelled, the promotion of learning and education up to a certain point, and led to continual discussion and interchange of ideas. Gratefully and eagerly our forefathers drew in the warm and genial breath which came to them from the intenser life and higher enlightenment of the south. Beda dates his history by the indictions of the Eastern emperors; and while in practice he obeyed his native king descended from Woden, in theory he recognized the larger and more rational sway of the Cæsar enthroned at Constantinople.

On a closer examination, we find that there were two principal centres, during the first two centuries after the conversion, where learning was honoured and literature flourished. These centres were Wessex and Northumbria. For although Christianity was first preached in Kent, and the great monastery at Canterbury was long a valuable school of theology and history (witness the liberal praise awarded by Beda to Abbot Albinus in the preface to his *Ecclesiastical History*), yet the limited size of the kingdom, and the ill fortune which befell it in its wars with Mercia and Wessex, seem to have checked its intellectual growth. When we have named the oldest form of the Saxon Chronicle,—that represented by the Parker MS. A,—and the not very interesting works of Abbot Ælfric, there is little left in the shape of extant writings, dating before the Conquest, for which we have to thank the men of Kent. But in Wessex and Northumbria alike, the size of the territory, the presence of numerous monasteries, perhaps also the proximity of Celtic peoples or societies endowed with many literary gifts,—the Britons in the case of Wessex, the Culdees of Iona in the case of Northumbria,—co-operated to produce a long period of literary activity, the

monuments of which it must now be our endeavour briefly to review and characterize.

But before we consider the Anglo-Saxon literature which was founded on Christianity, the question whether any Anglo-Saxon literature exists of date prior to the conversion demands an answer. It was formerly thought that the important poem of *Beowulf* was in the main a pagan work, and must have been produced before the Angles and Saxons quitted their German homes; but closer investigation has shown that it is permeated almost everywhere by Christian ideas, and that it cannot be dated earlier than the first quarter of the 8th century. But two poems remain, presenting problems of great difficulty, many of which have not yet been satisfactorily solved, which so far as appears must have been composed in Germany while our forefathers were still in their German seats. These are *The Traveller's Song* and *Deor's Complaint*. In the first, Widsith, a poet of Myrking race (the Myrkingings were a tribe dwelling near the Eider), recounts the nations that he had visited as a travelling gleeman, names the kings who ruled over them, and singles out two or three whose open-handed generosity he had experienced, and to whom he accordingly awards the tribute of a poet's praise. This poem may perhaps be dated from the second half of the 6th century. Though written in or near Anglen, after the migration of most of the Angles to Britain, the language of the poem seems to have been accommodated to the ordinary West-Saxon dialect, for in this respect it differs in no degree from the other poems which stand before and after it in the Exeter Codex. *Deor's Complaint* mentions Weland, the Teutonic demi-god corresponding to Vulcan, Theodric, Eormanric, &c.; it is the lament of a bard supplanted by a rival in his lord's favour. In date it is probably not far distant from the *Traveller's Song*.

We may now return to the literary development in Wessex. Christianity was introduced into Wessex by Bishop Birinus in 634, and spread over the whole kingdom with marvellous celerity. The bishop's see was fixed at first at Dorchester, near Oxford; thence it was moved to Winchester; before the end of the century it was necessary to carve out another bishopric farther to the west, and the see was fixed at Sherborne. Winchester, Malmesbury, and Glastonbury were great and famous monasteries early in the 8th century. The heroic Winfrid (better known as St Boniface), trained in a monastery at Exeter, could not rest contented that Wessex should have received the faith, but carried Christianity to the Germans. Great spiritual fervour, ardent zeal, great intellectual activity, seems to have prevailed in every part of the little kingdom. The interesting letters of St Boniface give us tantalizing glimpses of a busy life, social and monastic, in the west of England, no detailed picture of which it is now possible to reconstruct. The most distinguished known writer was St Aldhelm, a monk of Malmesbury, and, for a few years before his death in 709, bishop of Sherborne. His extant works in Latin are chiefly in praise of virginity, that form of self-mastery which, difficult as it was for a people teeming with undeveloped power and unexhausted passion, included, he might think, and made possible every other kind of self-mastery. The Saxon writings of St Aldhelm are lost, unless we accept a conjecture of Grimm that he was the author of *Andreas*, one of the poems in the Vercelli Codex. Cynewulf, the author of *Crist*, *Elene*, and *Juliana*, though to us unhappily no more than a name, was a poet of no mean powers. Mr Kemble was disposed to identify him with an abbot of Peterborough who lived

in the 11th century; but it is far more probable,—whatever weight we may attach to Grimm's hypothesis that he was a pupil of St Aldhelm,—that Cynewulf was a West-Saxon writer, and lived in the first half of the 8th century. *Crist* is a poem of nearly 1700 lines, incomplete at the beginning. When first edited by Mr Thorpe along with the other contents of the Exeter Codex, it was believed to be a string of disconnected poems. Dietrich was the first who pointed out the internal connection of these, and showed that they constituted one organic whole. Cynewulf seems to revel in the task of expressing in his mother tongue the new religious ideas which had come to his race. Beginning from the Annunciation, he expatiates on the various and inestimable benefits which Christ by his incarnation bestowed on men, concluding with a vivid picture of the last great day of account. The key-note of the poem seems to be found in the 15th canto, where the six "leaps," or movements, of Christ are enumerated:—the first, when He became incarnate; the second, when He was born; the third, when He mounted on the cross, and so on. The name "Cynewulf" is given in runes in the 16th canto; it occurs in the same way in the other poems attributed to this writer. *Elene* is the legend of the discovery of the true cross at Jerusalem by the empress Helena, the mother of Constantine; *Juliana* is the story of the martyrdom of the saint so named, under Maximian. *Guthlac*, a free version of the Latin life of St Guthlac (who died in 714) by Felix, a monk of Croyland, is probably the work of a Mercian writer, whose language was altered by a West-Saxon transcriber into conformity with that of the poems already mentioned. *Andreas*, a poem of more than 1700 lines, ascribed by Grimm, as we have seen, to St Aldhelm, but at any rate a West-Saxon poem of the 8th century, is founded on an apocryphal Greek narrative of the "Acts of Andrew and Matthew." The first-named apostle, after rescuing the second from confinement in a barbarous land named Mermedonia, and working numerous miracles of an amazing character, converts the entire nation, and departs after committing them to the charge of a pious bishop named Plato.

All the poems hitherto named, and indeed the great mass of Anglo-Saxon poetry, are written in that alliterative metre which was the favourite rhythm of the whole Teutonic north, and of which one variety may be seen in the famous poems of the Edda. Each line is in two sections, balanced the one against the other, and containing usually from four to eight syllables and two accents. The general rule of the metre is that the two accented words in the first section, and one of those in the second section, begin upon the same letter, if a consonant, but, if the accented words begin with vowels, then upon different letters.

The preponderance of opinion is now in favour of ascribing to *Beowulf*, the most important surviving monument of Anglo-Saxon poetry, a West-Saxon origin, and a date not later than the middle, nor earlier than the first decade, of the 8th century. Yet the difficulty of the problem may be estimated from the facts, that Thorkelin, the first editor, described *Beowulf* as a "Danish poem," that Mr Kemble, wrongly identifying the Geatas with the Angles, believed it to have been composed in Anglen before the migration, and brought over to Wessex before the end of the 5th century, and that Mr Thorpe considered it to be merely a translation of a Swedish poem of the 11th century. Notwithstanding this discrepancy, the general view taken above is that of Grein, Müllenhoff, and other eminent scholars, and we are convinced that the further investigation is carried the more firmly will its soundness be established. Founded on a single MS., which, as originally written, was full of errors, and now is much

defaced, the text of *Beowulf* can never, unless another MS. should be discovered, be placed on a thoroughly satisfactory footing; much, however, has been done for its improvement by the labours of German and Danish critics. The general drift of the poem is to celebrate the heroic deeds of Beowulf, who, originally of Swedish race, was adopted by the king of Gautland, or Gotland (as the southern portion of Sweden is still called), and brought up with his own sons. Hearing that the Danish king Hrothgar is harassed by the attacks of a man-eating monster called Grendel, he sails to Zealand to his aid, and after various adventures kills both Grendel and his mother. After this Beowulf is chosen king of Gotland, and reigns many years in great prosperity, till in his old age, undertaking to fight with a fiery dragon that has been making great ravages among his subjects, he succeeds in killing it, but receives a mortal injury in the struggle. The burning of his body, and the erection of a huge mound or cairn over his ashes, as a beacon "easy to be seen far off by seafaring men," conclude the poem, and form a passage of remarkable beauty.

Towards the end of the 8th century the descents of the piratical heathens known by the general name of Danes, but probably born for the most part in Scandinavian countries lying to the north of Denmark, began to plague the English coasts. These destroying savages resembled the modern Turks in possessing fine military qualities, and above all indomitable courage; they were also like the Turks in this respect that, wherever they set their foot, progress of every kind was arrested, culture was blasted, and the hopes of civilization died away. Fortunately they were not, like the Turks, absolutely deaf to the voice of the Christian missionary, though their natural brutishness made them difficult to convert and prone to relapse. With incredible pains, and a charity that nothing could disgust or deter, the church gradually won over these Scandinavian Calibans to the Christian creed; and when once converted their immense natural energy and tenacity were turned into right and beneficial channels, at least in great measure. But for 230 years,—from the sack of Lindisfarne to the accession of Canute,—the so-called Danes were the curse of England, destroying monasteries and the schools maintained by them, burning churches and private houses, making life and property everywhere insecure, and depriving the land of that tranquillity without which literature and art are impossible. After a long prevalence of this state of things, society in Wessex having been, one would think, almost reduced to its first elements, Alfred arose, and after obtaining some successes in battle over the Danes, leading to a treaty and the conversion of part of them to Christianity, obtained a period of peace for his harassed and dejected countrymen. History tells us how well he wrought to build up in every way the fallen edifice of West-Saxon society. Among his labours not the least meritorious was his translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Pope Gregory's work *De Cura Pastoralis*, the famous treatise of Boethius *De Consolatione*, and the *Universal History* of Orosius. He also founded several schools, and made a beginning in the work of restoring monasteries. Yet in spite of his generous efforts, the evils caused by the Danes could not be repaired. A sort of blight seemed to have passed over the Anglo-Saxon genius; the claims of material existence suddenly seemed to engross their thoughts, perhaps because their sufferings had taught them that, however it may be with individuals, for nations all higher developments must have a basis of material prosperity to rest upon. Now and then a great man appeared, endowed with a reparative force, and with a courage which aimed at raising the fallen spirit of the people, and turning them back again into the old paths of nobleness.

Such a man was St Dunstan, who fought with a giant's strength against corruption, sloth, and ignorance, and was ever faithful to the interests of learning. There is in the Bodleian Library a little volume, probably written in his own hand; it is a sort of common-place book; the frontispiece is a drawing of the saint prostrated at the feet of the throned Christ, executed by Dunstan himself; among the contents of the volume are—a grammatical treatise by Euty chius, with extremely curious Welsh glosses, part of Ovid *De Arte Amandi* with similar glosses, and lessons, in Latin and Greek, taken from the Pentateuch and the prophets. But his work was undone during the disastrous reign of Ethelred II., at the end of which the Danish power established itself in England. Under Edward the Confessor, French influences began to be greatly felt. The two races of the Teutonic north had torn each other to pieces, and the culture which Saxon had been able to impart to Northman was not sufficient to discipline him into a truly civilized man. England, though at a terrible cost, had to be knit on to the state-system of Southern Europe; her anarchy must give place to centralization; her schools, and her art, and her architecture be remodelled by Italians and Frenchmen; her poets turn their eyes, not towards Iceland, but towards Normandy or Provence.

Turning now to the other literary centre, the Northumbrian kingdom, we find that impulse and initiation were due to more than one source. In the main, the conversion of the Angles north of the Tees, and the implantation among them of the germs of culture, are traceable to Iona, and, indirectly, to the Irish Church and St Patrick. From Ireland, in the persons of St Columba and his followers, was wafted to the long low island surrounded by the mountains of the Hebrides, a ministry of light and civilization, which from the 6th to the 11th century diffused its blessings over northern Europe. Oswald, son of the Bernician king Ethelfrid, was driven out of Northumbria after his father's death by Edwin of Deira, and took refuge among the northern Picts. He embraced Christianity through the teaching of the monks of Iona or some monastery dependent on it; and when he became king of Bernicia in 634, one of his first thoughts was to send to his old teachers, and ask that missionaries might be sent to instruct his people. Aidan accordingly came from Iona and founded a bishop's see at Lindisfarne, or Holy Isle. Hence issued the founders of the monasteries of Hexham, Coldingham, Whitby, and many other places. The actual representatives of the monks of Iona returned after some years to their own country, because they would not give way in the dispute concerning Easter; but the civilizing effects of their mission did not pass away. The school of piety and learning which produced an Aidan, an Adamnan, and a Cuthbert deserved well not of England only but of humanity. Adamnan, abbot of Iona about the year 690, has a peculiar interest for us, because a long extract from his work on the holy places is incorporated by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He also wrote a life of his founder, St Columba, printed by Canisius and in the *Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum*. To the encouragement of Bishop Aidan we owe it that Hilda, a lady of the royal house of Deira, established monasteries at Hartlepool and Streonshalch (afterwards Whitby); and it was by the monks of Streonshalch that the seed was sown, which, falling upon a good heart and a capacious brain, bore fruit in the poetry of Cædmon, the earliest English poet. We need not repeat the well-known story of the vision, in which the destined bard, then a humble menial employed about the stables and boat-service of the monastery, believed that an injunction of more than mortal authority was laid upon him, to "sing of the beginning of creation." The impulse having been once communicated, Cædmon, as Bede

informs us, continued for a long time to clothe in his native measures the principal religious facts recorded in the Pentateuch and in the New Testament. Is the work commonly known as Cædmon's *Paraphrase* identical with the work described by Bede? Have we in this paraphrase a genuine utterance of the 7th century? The answers to these questions are still involved in doubt, and to enter upon the discussion which they presuppose would be foreign to our present purpose. We will merely say that the unique MS. of the *Paraphrase*, which is of the 10th century, contains no indication whatever of authorship, and that it opens in a manner different from the prologue made by the real Cædmon, of which we have a Latin version in Bede and an Anglo-Saxon version in Alfred's translation of Bede. On the other hand, the portion of the MS. which is written in the first hand agrees tolerably well in its contents with the real work of Cædmon, as Bede describes it. The portion of the MS. which is written in the second hand is probably of much later date; some critics have not hesitated to designate its author as the "pseudo-Cædmon." The opening cantos of the *Paraphrase*, which treat of the rebellion of the angels and the fall of man, are allowed by general consent to be those most vividly expressed, and most characterized by poetical power. It is here that bright strong phrases occur, which, as is believed, Milton himself did not disdain to utilize, and his known acquaintance with Francis Junius, the then possessor of the Cædmon MS., seems to lend some countenance to the belief.

Hitherto the influences in Northumbria tending to culture have been found to be only indirectly Roman; the immediate source of them was Iona. But when we come to the Venerable Bede, the great light of the Northumbrian church, the glory of letters in a rude and turbulent age, nay, even the teacher and the beacon light of all Europe for the period from the 7th to the 10th century, we find that the fountain whence he drew the streams of thought and knowledge came from no derivative source, but was supplied directly from the well-head of Christian culture. Benedict Biscop, a young Northumbrian thane, much employed and favoured in the court of Oswy, abandoned the world for the church, and travelling to Rome resided there several years, diligently studying the details of ecclesiastical life and training, and the institutes of liturgical order. Returning to England in 668, with Theodore, the new primate, and the abbot Hadrian, he brought into Northumbria a large number of books, relics, and other ecclesiastical objects, and, being warmly welcomed by King Egfrid, founded a monastery in honour of St Peter on land granted by the king at the mouth of the Wear. That the other great apostolic name venerated at Rome might not go without due honour, he built a second monastery soon afterwards in honour of St Paul at Jarrow on the Tyne, seven miles from Wearmouth. After the founder's time the two monasteries were usually governed by one abbot. When only seven years old, Bede, like Orderic in a later age, was brought by his father to Jarrow, and given up to the abbot to be trained to monastic life. The rest of his life, down to the year 731, was passed in the monastery, as we know from his own statement; in 735 he died. His works, which have several times been edited in a complete form abroad, but never yet in his own country, may be grouped under five heads—1, Educational; 2, Theological; 3, Historical; 4, Poetical; 5, Letters. To the first class belong the treatises *De Ortiographia* and *De Arte Metrica*, the first being a short dictionary, giving the correct spelling and the idiomatic use of a considerable number of Latin words, with (in many cases) their Greek equivalents,—the second a prosody, describing the principal classical metres, with examples. *De Natura Rerum* is a

cosmogony and cosmography, with numerous diagrams and maps. A number of treatises, of which the most important are *De Ratione Temporum* and *De Ratione Compti*, fall under the same head; their general object being to elucidate all questions connected with the ecclesiastical calendar and the right calculation of Easter. Under the second head, that of theological works, fall his *Expositiones* on St Mark's and St Luke's Gospels, on the Acts, and other books of the New Testament, his homilies, forty-nine in number, and a book of Prayers, chiefly made up of verses taken from the Psalms. Under the head of "Historical lives of five abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, a life of St Cuthbert, another of St Felix, bishop of Nola, and a *Martyrology*, which has several times been printed. The *Ecclesiastical History* opens with a preface, in which, in that tone of calmness and mild dignity which go far to make a perfect prose style, Beda explains in detail the nature and the sources of the evidence on which he has relied in compiling the work. A short introduction then sketches the general history of Britain from the landing of Julius Cæsar to the coming of Augustine, giving special details respecting the martyrdom of St Alban under Diocletian, and the missionary preaching of St Germanus of Auxerre in the 5th century. From the landing of Augustine in 596 to the year 731, the progress of Christianity, the successes and the reverses of the church in the arduous work of bringing within her pale the fiercely warring nations of the Heptarchy, are narrated, fully but unsystematically, for each kingdom of the Heptarchy in turn. A short sketch of "Universal History," forming the latter portion of the *De Ratione Temporum*, has been treated by the editors of the *Monumenta Hist. Brit.* as if it were a separate work, and printed, with the title *De Sex Etatibus Mundi*, in that useful but unwieldy volume. Among the poetical works are a life of St Cuthbert in Latin hexameters, a number of hymns, most of which are written in the lively iambic metre of which a familiar instance is the hymn beginning "Vexilla regis prodeunt," a poem on Justin Martyr in a trochaic metre, and another in hexameters on the Day of Judgment. This last seems to have been much admired; Simeon of Durham copied it entire into his history. The versification of this remarkable poem has considerable merits; in that respect it is not more than three hundred years behind Claudian. But when we come to the spirit of the poem, and think of the moral atmosphere which it implies, and aims at extending, we see that ten thousand years would not adequately measure the chasm which divides the monastic poets from the last "vates" of heathen Rome. For the key-note of Beda's poem is the sense of sin; whatever is expressed by the words compunction, penance, expiation, heart-crushing sorrow for having offended God, trust in the one Redeemer, pervades all his lines; and we need not say how alien is all this to the spirit of the poets, who, with little thought of individual and personal reformation, staked their all in the future upon the greatness and stability of Rome. "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento." The letters, most of which are merely the dedications and addresses prefixed to some of his works, refer little to contemporary events; two or three, however, are of great interest.

At the time when Beda died (735), the Angles of Northumbria were beginning to lay aside the use of arms, and zealously to frequent the monastery schools; among their princes, as among those of Wessex, some were found to exchange a crown for a cowl and a throne for a cell. But a reaction set in; perhaps some had tried asceticism who had no vocation for it; and after the middle of the century Northumbrian history is darkened by the frequent record of dissension among the members of the royal house,

civil war, and assassination. On this state of things came the ravages of the Northmen, and made it incurable. Lindisfarne, with all its treasures and collections, was destroyed by them in 793. This is but a sample of the havoc wrought by those barbarians; yet for a long time many monasteries escaped; and, in particular, that of York was a centre of learning far on into the 9th century, probably till the disastrous battle occurred before York, described in the Saxon Chronicle under 867. At this monastery Alcuin was educated, and when grown up he had charge of its school and library. In 780 he was sent on a mission to Rome; on his return, at Parma, he fell in with the emperor Charlemagne, who invited him to settle at Aix-la-Chapelle, at that time the chief imperial residence, to teach his children, and aid in the organization of education throughout his dominions. Having obtained the permission of his superiors at York, Alcuin complied with the request; and from that time to his death, in 804, resided, with little intermission, either at the imperial court or at Tours. Alcuin's letters, though the good man was of a somewhat dry and pedantic turn, contain much matter of interest. His extant works are of considerable bulk; they are chiefly educational and theological treatises, which for lack of vigour or originality of treatment have fallen into complete oblivion. What is still of value in the works of Alcuin is, besides the letters, the lives of St Willibrord, the English apostle of Friesland, St Vedast, and St Richer.

After the death of Alcuin, the confusion in Northumbria became ever worse and worse, for the Danes forced their way into the land, and many years passed before the two nations could agree to live on friendly terms together side by side. But for the *Durham Gospels*, a version in the Angle dialect of the four gospels, and a few similar remains, the north of England presents a dead blank to the historian of literature from Alcuin to Simeon of Durham, a period of more than three hundred years. In the south, as we have seen, the resistance to the intrusion of the barbarian element was more successful, and the intellectual atmosphere far less dark. The works of Ælfric, who died archbishop of Canterbury in 1006, are the last subject of consideration in the present section. They are chiefly interesting because they show the growing importance of the native language. Ælfric's *Homilies* are in Anglo-Saxon; his *Colloquy* is a conversation on common things, in Latin and Anglo-Saxon, between a master and his scholar; his *Grammar*, adapted from Priscian and Donatus, has for its object to teach Latin to Anglo-Saxons; its editorial and didactic part is therefore in Anglo-Saxon. The annals of public events, to which, as collected and arranged by Archbishop Plegmund at the end of the 9th century, we give the name of the *Saxon Chronicle*, continued to be recorded at Canterbury in the native language till about the date of the Conquest; after that time the task passed into the hands of the monks of Peterborough, and was carried on by them for nearly a hundred years. A work of collecting and transcribing the remains of the national poetry began, of which the priceless volume known as the *Exeter Codex*, given by bishop Leofric to the library of Exeter cathedral in the reign of Edward the Confessor, is the monument and the fruit. The collection contained in the manuscript discovered about fifty years ago at Vercelli was probably made about the same time. In these two collections are contained the works of Cynewulf, the *Traveller's Song*, *Guthlac*, *Andreas*, the poem on the *Phoenix*, &c. Being thus made more widely known, the ancient poems would soon have found imitators, and a fresh development of Anglo-Saxon poetry would have been the result. Had there been no violent change, England would by slow degrees have got through with the task of

assimilating and taming the Northmen; and, in spite of physical isolation, would have participated, though probably lagging far behind the rest, in the general intellectual advance of the nations of Europe. The tissue of her civilization would have been, in preponderating measure, Teutonic, like that of Germany; but it would have lacked the golden thread of the "Holy Roman Empire," which brought an element of idealism and beauty into the plain texture of German life. For good or for evil, the process of national and also of intellectual development was to be altered and quickened by the arrival of a knightly race of conquerors from across the channel.

II. *Anglo-Norman Period, 1066-1215.*—The 11th century is remarkably barren in great names and memories which captivate the imagination; it was, however, an advance upon the 10th, which Baronius has described as the central and worst period of intellectual darkness. In England, for about 150 years after the Conquest, there was no unity of intellectual life; in political life, however, the iron hand of the Conqueror compelled an external uniformity, by the universal exaction of homage to himself. The strength of the Norman monarchy, the absence of religious differences, and, after a time, the loss of Normandy, were causes working powerfully in aid of the conciliation and interfusion of the different elements of the population. But at first it was as if three separate nations were encamped confusedly on British soil,—the Normans, the English, and the Welsh. The clergy, as a fourth power, of all nationalities or of none, became,—by its use of Latin as a common tongue, by preaching a common faith and teaching a common philosophy, and as representing the equality and charity which are among the essential features of Christianity,—an ever present mediating influence tending to break down the partitions between the camps. The intellectual state and progress of each nation, down to and a little beyond the end of the 12th century, must now be briefly discussed.

1. *Normans.*—In less than two centuries after the Northmen under Rollo had settled in Normandy, they had not only exchanged their Teutonic speech for the language of France, but made,—with French as the medium of expression,—remarkable literary progress. In this progress the Normans settled in Ireland participated to the full. It is probable that the Tuoldus, who, availing himself of earlier Frankish lays and chronicles, composed towards the end of the 11th century the noble heroic poem called the *Chanson de Roland*, was an abbot of Peterborough, son of the clerk of the same name who was the Conqueror's preceptor. From the reign of Henry I., though the names of several writers are known, little of importance has come down to us. The treatise on politeness called *Urbanus*, attributed to Henry himself, is in all probability the composition of a later age. The works of the hapless satirist, Luc de la Barre, are not extant, and Evrard's translation (1130) of Cato's *Disticha* into French verse is not a noteworthy performance. The reign of Stephen, though confusion and civil war prevailed over a great part of England, witnessed an extraordinary outburst of literary activity. Of the historians who shed a lustre on this reign we shall speak in a different connexion; but it was also memorable for its French poets. Guichard of Beaulieu, a cell of St Alban's (1150), produced a poem in Alexandrines of some merit, on the vices of the age; Geoffrey Gaimar (1140) wrote his lively *Estorie des Engles* (a chronicle of the Anglo-Saxon kings); and Benoît de Ste More, either in this reign or early in that of Henry II., produced a vast poem on the *History of the War of Troy*, which seems to have been the original exemplar on which the numerous "Troy-books" of later generations were modelled. The

family of Benoit was of Norman extraction, but settled in England. Under Henry II., whose ceaseless and enlightened energy stimulated production wherever it was exerted, French poetry took an ever bolder sweep. Robert Wace, a native of Jersey and a clerk of Caen, composed about 1155 his famous *Brut d'Angleterre*, a history of the kings of Britain from Brutus to Cadwallader, founded on the *Historia Britonum* of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Again, when Henry had commissioned Benoit to write a metrical history of the dukes of Normandy, the quick-witted Wace anticipated his slower rival, and produced in 1160 the first part of the *Roman de Rou*, treating of the same subject.

Thus far we have considered the Anglo-Norman poets chiefly as chroniclers; we have now to regard them as romance writers. It is true that in their hands history slides into romance, and *vice versa*; thus the *Brut d'Angleterre* may be regarded as historical in so far as it treats of the series of British kings, mythical as that series itself may be, but as a romance in most of that portion of it which is devoted to the adventures of Arthur. We here enter upon a wide field; the stores of Arthurian, Carolingian, and general chivalrous romance suggest themselves to the mind; a thousand interesting inquiries present themselves; but the limits traced for us prescribe a treatment little more than *allusive*; that is, French romance can only be described in virtue of the stimulating and suggestive effect which it had on English writers. This effect was produced in a measure by great poems like the *Alexandris* (1200), by the original French romances on Charlemagne and his peers, and by that on the third crusade and the prowess of King Richard. But the romances relating to Arthur, doubtless on account of the extent to which they really sprang from British soil, were those which most profoundly stirred the English mind. It is not difficult to trace the steps by which the legend grew. Gildas, writing in the 6th century, knows of Arthur's victory at Mount Badon, but does not name him. Nennius, whose date is uncertain, but who should probably be assigned to the 9th century, mentions the same victory as one of several which were gained by "the magnanimous Arthur" over the Saxon invader. Three centuries pass, and the story comes to us again, greatly amplified, in the *British History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth (1126). This history, Geoffrey assures us, was founded upon a book in the Breton language, brought over from Brittany by an archdeacon of Oxford. Ritson scouted the assertion as fictitious, yet it was probably true; and the supposition of a Breton origin for his history is exactly what would best account for the great development which we find the Arthur legend to have now attained, in comparison with the age of Nennius. For Brittany was the fruitful parent of numberless forms of imaginative fiction,—a trait noticed by Chaucer:

"These olde gentil Bretons in their daies,
Of divers adventures maden laies."

and what character would the Breton bards be more likely to embellish than that of the hero king, who, during and before the migration of their forefathers, had made such a gallant stand against the Saxon? Yet, though Geoffrey has so much to tell us of Arthur, he is silent about the Round Table. That splendid feature of the legend first appears in the *Brut* of Wace, and was probably derived from Breton poems or traditions to which Geoffrey had not access. Layamon reproduces it, with additional details, in his version of Wace. Other branches of Arthurian romance, especially those relating to Tristan and Perceval, became about this time widely popular; it is to this period also that the *Chevalier du Lion* of Chrétien de Troyes belongs. Suddenly there is a great change. A