

CHAPTER III.

LITERATURE OF THE NORMAN PERIOD.

A.D. 1066 TO 1350.

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE AGE OF CHAUCER.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

1. GLANCES AT THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND, A.D. 1066 TO 1350.—The period we are about to consider covers nearly three centuries. The death of *Edward the Confessor*, the last of the Saxon kings, was soon followed by the hard-fought and decisive battle of Hastings. The flower of England's nobility fell on that blood-stained field. Norman skill and valor had triumphed, and William, henceforth known as the *Conqueror*, was crowned king of England in Westminster Abbey. The Confessor, just before his death, had completed that world-famous structure. He was the first of England's rulers interred within its sacred walls; and the first crowned within it was the Norman Duke.*

Eleven kings reigned during this period, the most

* As early as 610 a church and monastery had been founded at Westminster. "This modest monastic colony," says Montalembert, "established itself on a frightful and almost inaccessible site, in the middle of a deep marsh, on an islet formed by an arm of the Thames, and so covered with briars and thorns that it was called *Thorny Island*. From its position to the west of London it took a new name, destined to rank among the most famous in the world—that of *Westminster*, or monastery of the West."—*The Monks of the West*.

remarkable of whom were *William the Conqueror*, *Henry II.*, *Richard the Lion-hearted*, and *Edward III.* The chief events were the eight *Crusades*, in which two English kings took a part; the murder of *St. Thomas à Becket*; the invasion of *Ireland*; the signing of the *Magna Charta*; the first *representative Parliament*; the *conquest of Wales and Scotland*; and the *battles of Bannockburn and Crécy*.

2. EFFECTS OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST.—With the Norman Conquest came a new order of things—political, social, and literary. It is true that the nation at large, the great body of the people—about two millions in number—remained unchanged. Saxons, Englishmen, they still were. But William suffered no Englishman to hold any place of trust or honor. The court, the nobility, the superior clergy, and the army were composed of Normans. The uncouth Saxons were left to till the soil, to raise cattle; in short, to be the humble "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to their strange rulers. The Conqueror was a hard master. At eight o'clock each evening the sound of the *curfew* which "told the knell of parting day" warned the people to extinguish their lights and retire to rest. They were to beware of killing a stag, boar, or fawn; for an offence against the forest-laws they would lose their eyes. They had nothing of all their property assured them, except as an alms, or on condition of tribute, or by taking the oath of homage. Here a free Saxon proprietor was made a body-slave on his own estate. The Normans sold them, hired them, worked them on joint account like an ox or an ass. The Normans would not and could not borrow any ideas or customs from such boors; they despised them as coarse and stupid. They stood among them

superior in force and culture, more versed in letters, more expert in the arts of luxury. They preserved their own manners and their own speech.*

The Norman baron erected his strong castle on some elevation, and lorded it over his district. Feudalism was introduced, and a new legislature, known as a *parliament*, or talking-ground, took the place of the Saxon *witenagemot*, or assembly of the wise. Indeed, the Norman conquest was one of the most complete in all history.

But while William and his successors governed the country with despotic sway, they failed not to elevate it in the rank of nations. If they stripped it of its liberty and many temporal advantages, it must be owned that by their valor they raised the reputation of its arms, and deprived their native Normandy of its greatest men, both in Church and State, with whom they adorned England. Being at once dukes of Normandy and kings of England, they introduced the latter within the circle of continental nations; and by their efforts the land of Bede and Alfred, for the first time in history, obtained an important voice in the councils of Europe. In truth, the Norman Conquest was to England a blessing in disguise—an event to which much of the future greatness of that nation may be traced.

3. RELIGION AND LIBERTY.—The despotism established by William the Conqueror, and continued by his immediate successors, reached its climax in the reckless reign of King John. His idiotic tyranny became unendurable. The Barons, under the direction of Cardinal Langton, formed a powerful league for

* Taine.

the purpose of obtaining a lasting guarantee as security for the rights and privileges of the Church and the people. Cardinal Langton “administered to them an oath, by which they bound themselves to each other to conquer or die in the defence of their liberties.”

The Barons and the Cardinal* met John on the famous plain of *Runnymede*.† There, in 1215, they compelled the king to sign the celebrated document called *Mag'na Char'ta*,‡ which established *the supremacy of the law over the will of the monarch*, and which, to this day, is regarded as the basis of English liberties.

The signing of the Great Charter, in which the nation at large had an interest, served to bring closer together, if not entirely to unite, the hitherto divided Norman and Saxon. It is the starting-point from which we can fairly date the beginning of that commingling and consolidation of races and languages which in time become known to us as the *English People* and the *English Language*.

4. OTHER EVENTS.—Henry III., the son of John, struggled hard to abolish the privileges forced from his father, and to crush the power of the nobles. It was in his reign that the wants and dissensions of the time led to a meeting or conference of representative

* Stephen Langton was born in England in the early part of the twelfth century, and was educated at the University of Paris, of which he rose to be Chancellor. He was elevated to the dignity of Cardinal and appointed to the See of Canterbury in 1207, by his former friend and fellow-student, Pope Innocent III. It is well to remember that the name of the patriotic Cardinal Langton is the *first* in the list of subscribing witnesses on Magna Charta. He died in 1228.

† Runnymede is a long stretch of green meadow, lying along the right bank of the river Thames, near Windsor, about twenty miles from London.

‡ Great Charter. A copy of it was sent to every cathedral, and ordered to be read publicly twice a year.

men, which may be regarded as the origin of the *English Parliament*. Edward I., the last of England's kings who performed deeds of valor on the plains of Palestine, on being called to the throne, turned his arms against the Welsh and the Scots under Wallace, subduing both countries. But, after his death, the heroism of *Robert Bruce* and the celebrated victory of Bannockburn, in 1314, annihilated the power of England in North Britain. Years had been employed in forging the fetters of Scotland. One battle made her free and independent. The year 1350 brings us to the age of Chaucer and the long and brilliant reign of Edward III.—a period at which we shall glance in our next Historical Introduction.

5. THE CRUSADES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON MANNERS, COMMERCE, LEARNING, AND LITERATURE.—The Crusades were the great events of the Middle Ages.* It would not be easy to understand the spirit or literature of these remote times, or the history of the world since, without some knowledge of the bearing which those mighty achievements had on the progress of Europe. It was in those distant days—well named “the heroic ages of Christianity”—that over each castle chimney, carved in oak, might be seen the simple but sublime motto: “*There is only this—FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.*”

It was then that *chivalry* reigned, the distinctive

* The Crusades were military expeditions set on foot under the banner of the cross for the purpose of delivering the Holy Land from the oppressive yoke of the Mahometans. The soldiers wore, as a mark of their engagement, a cross made of red stuff, and commonly fastened on the right shoulder; hence the names *Crusade* and *Crusader*. The Crusades were eight in number, and extended from 1095 to 1272. It was in the third Crusade that the English king, Richard Cœur de Lion, or the Lion-hearted, performed the prodigies of valor which have immortalized his name. For an account of the Crusades see Fredet's *Modern History*, Part V.

qualities of which were bravery, piety, and modesty. The Catholic knight was the hero of the “Ages of Faith.” But it has been well said that with the virtues of chivalry were associated a new and purer spirit of love, an inspired homage for genuine female worth, which was now revered as the acme of human excellence, and, maintained by religion itself under the image of a Virgin Mother, infused into all hearts a mysterious sense of the purity of love.*

The commerce of modern Europe dates from the Crusades, which recovered, reopened, and multiplied the ancient trading routes of the Mediterranean and the East.

The revival of letters, which had occurred some time previously, received a mighty impulse from those historic enterprises which aroused the heart and the intellect of Christian Europe. Greek learning and literature were transported to the West, and studied with avidity. The arts were likewise revived. That lofty style of Christian architecture known as the *Gothic* originated about the time of the Crusades. The Gothic cathedral with its graceful spires pointing heavenward symbolizes the grand religious spirit of the Middle Ages. Its first and greatest object is to express the elevation of holy thoughts, the loftiness of meditation set free from earth and proceeding unfettered to the skies. Such is the sublime impression which is at once stamped on the soul of the beholder—however little he may himself be capable of analyzing his feelings—as he gazes on those far-stretching columns and airy domes. The whole inspires a feeling of awe and a vague sense of the Divinity.†

The Middle Ages, in short, were times of great faith, great men, great books,* and great achievements. The Crusades secured the independence of Europe, and gave it a most powerful impulse in the career of civilization. No other events recorded in history are so colossal as the Crusades, in which, as Balzac eloquently remarks, "we see numberless nations arise, march across deserts, bury themselves in countries with which they are unacquainted, and expose themselves to all the rigors of climate and seasons: and for what purpose? To deliver a tomb! Grand and immortal movement, where hundreds of nations advance to certain death, not in pursuit of a miserable self-interest, not to find an abode in milder and more fertile countries, not from an ardent desire to obtain for themselves earthly advantages, but inspired only by a religious idea, by a jealous desire to possess the tomb of Him who expired on the cross for the salvation of the human race! When compared with this what becomes of the lofty deeds of the Greeks chanted by Homer? Greece arises to avenge an injured husband; Europe to redeem the sepulchre of a God!"

6. PROGRESS OF LEARNING IN ENGLAND, A.D. 1066-1350.—We have already learned of the revival of letters on the continent of Europe—a revival which owed its first impulse to the influence of the Catholic Church, seconded by the efforts of the celebrated Charlemagne, who completed his splendid reign in the early part of the ninth century. But the first

* The most famous of these is the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor and prince of Christian philosophers. This incomparable man was born at Belcastro, Italy, in 1226, and died in 1274, at the age of forty-eight years. See *Little Lives of the Great Saints*, page 385.

waves of this literary revival only reached England with the Norman Conquest. At that date the country was in a very backward state in regard to everything intellectual. William the Conqueror found the Saxons a rustic and almost illiterate people.

The great leaders of thought and fathers of learning in England, immediately after the Conquest, were two renowned monks who became Archbishops of Canterbury—*Lanfranc* and *Anselm*. Though both natives of the north of Italy, they were superiors of the two chief monasteries in Normandy when William invaded England.

Lanfranc was chosen Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of England in 1070. He founded many new schools, restored the study of art and science, and inspired the nation with a love for learning. He was an able logician and one of the most eloquent Latin writers of his age. Nor was he less famous for his knowledge of Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and Canon Law.*

Lanfranc's pupil and immediate successor, St. Anselm, was a man still more illustrious. He was the greatest educator, philosopher, and theologian of his time, and to-day he is honored as one of the Doctors of the Church.† By the lofty zeal of those renowned

* Lanfranc was born at Pavia, Italy, in 1005, and educated at Pavia and Bologna. He died in 1089, at the age of eighty-four. His chief writings are *Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul*, *Treatise on the Blessed Eucharist* against Berengarius, *Sermons*, and *Letters*—all in Latin. On one occasion after the elevation of Lanfranc to the Primacy of England, he was obliged to visit Rome and have an audience with Pope Alexander II., who paid him such marked respect that some of the Roman clergy asked the reason. "It is not because he is Primate of England," replied the Pope, "that I rose to meet him, but because I was his pupil at Bec, where I sat at his feet and listened to his words of instruction."

† St. Anselm was born in 1033, at Aosta, Italy. He was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, and his great sanctity, vigor-

prelates, learning was revived in England, and the light of knowledge shone with renewed brightness.

Nor can we forget the Conqueror and his successors in connection with the progress of knowledge. Kings and nobles vied with each other in the erection of monasteries and the endowment of seats of learning. From the Conquest to the signing of the Magna Charta—about a century and a half—we learn that *five hundred and fifty-seven monasteries* were founded in England. These were the schools and colleges of that age, and the monks were the teachers and professors.

“Such great institutions of persons,” says the Protestant Warton, “dedicated to religious and literary leisure, while they diffused an air of civility and softened the manners of the people, must have afforded powerful incentives to studious pursuits, and have consequently added no small degree of stability to the interests of learning.”

“The monks,” writes Balmes, “were not content with sanctifying themselves. From the first they influenced society. The light and life which their holy abodes contained labored to enlighten and fertilize the chaos of the world.”

7. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PROGRESS OF LEARNING.—At all times, but more especially in those rude ages of war and conquest, the Church was the guardian of learning and the soul of progress. The clarion tones of her sacred voice were ever heard urg-

ous character, and vast intellectual power made him the foremost man of his age. Among the works of this famous saint are, *On Truth, On Original Sin, The Fall of Satan, The Liberty of the Will, The Reason Why God Created Man, Why God was Made Man, and The Consistency of Freedom with the Divine Foreknowledge*—all in Latin. These great questions were then uppermost in men's minds, and they were handled by St. Anselm in a new and more attractive mode of appeal to pure reason. He died in 1109.

ing forward the spread of sound knowledge. To her we owe the revival of the arts, sciences, and literature. She taught her children to love learning and to found and endow schools; and she educated eminent men to govern those centres of knowledge.*

Before the rise of the universities, the educational institutions of the Middle Ages were of two classes—the *cathedral schools* and the *monastic schools*. The studies were divided into two courses known as the *Trivium** and the *Quadrivium*.† The Trivium, or lower course, comprised grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The Quadrivium, or higher course, embraced arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. The doors of these schools were open to all—rich and poor alike. It was the Catholic Church that first taught the world to respect man and merit rather than rank or fortune.

An able writer referring to this period says: “Schools for the poor were especially attended to. The Councils of the Church—those landmarks of civilization—from the beginning decree that every church that has the means provide a master for the *gratuitous instruction of the poor* ‘according to the ancient canons.’ That of Lateran in 1180 says that, the Church of God ‘like a dutiful mother’ being bound to provide for the indigent in soul as well as in body, to every church shall be attached a master to instruct the poor gratuitously.”‡

* Religion and literature were always cultivated together. The library grew up with the school under the shadow of the Church.—*Spalding*.

† Trivium, or Three Roads, because grammar, logic, and rhetoric constitute a triple way to eloquence.

‡ Quadrivium, or Four Roads. The Trivium and Quadrivium together constituted the *seven liberal arts*, or circle of study in the Middle Ages.

§ Brother Azarias, *Philosophy of Literature*.

8. RISE OF THE UNIVERSITIES.—Nearly all the great institutions of learning in Europe carry the mind back to the ages of faith. As a spring-time, a time of seed-sowing, have those ages been to modern Europe. "The long and silent process of vegetation," says Schlegel, "must precede the spring, and the spring must precede the maturity of the fruit. The youth of individuals has often been called the spring-time of life. I imagine we may so speak of whole nations with the same propriety as of individuals. They also have their seasons of unfolding intellect and mental blossoming. The age of the Crusades, chivalry, romance, and minstrelsy was an *intellectual spring* among all the nations of the west."

The enthusiasm of the Crusades was followed by an enthusiasm of study. From the *thirteenth century* we may properly date the rise of the great universities—*Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna, Pavia, Padua, Salamanca*, and others. Before that time those seats of learning had existed as schools; but it remained for the thirteenth century to develop and enlarge them into higher and more permanent centres of thought, art, science, and literature.

In the advancement of learning and civilization the value of the universities cannot be overestimated. "One of the causes," observes Balmes, "that contributed most to the development of the human mind was the creation of great centres of instruction, which collected the most illustrious talents and learning, and diffused rays of light in all directions." These grand institutions were created and sustained by the Catholic Church. "All the universities were founded either by religious princes or by bishops and priests; and all were under the direction of different religious orders."

As time went on the thirst for learning increased. At the beginning of the fourteenth century over 20,000 students attended the University of Oxford,* and the number at Paris was still greater. Albertus Magnus † and Abelard ‡ were professors in the University of Paris. Albertus was compelled to lecture in the public square that still bears his name, and Abelard counted his audience by thousands. We are told that of Abelard's pupils twenty became cardinals and fifty bishops and archbishops. Though Bologna § was the oldest of the universities, Paris stood at the head of them all as a place of general instruction. ||

One of Abelard's English pupils, the famous John of Salisbury, writing from Paris in 1176, gives the following glowing account: "When I saw," he says, "the abundance of provisions, the gayety of the people, the good condition of the clergy, the majesty and glory of all the Church, the varied occupations of men admitted to the study of philosophy, I seemed to see that Jacob's ladder whose summit reached heaven, and on which the angels ascended and descended. I must confess that indeed the Lord was in this place."

* At the present time the number of students at Oxford is about 2,000.

† A celebrated Dominican, who was St. Thomas Aquinas' preceptor. He died in 1280.

‡ A famous scholastic philosopher and monk, who died in 1142.

§ Ten thousand students are said to have attended Bologna in 1262.

|| It seems to have been in the early portion of the thirteenth century that *degrees*, or titles of learning, began to be conferred on such students as passed through the university courses of study with approval. According to the historian Robertson, in his *History of Charles V.*, the "first obscure mention of these academical degrees in the University of Paris—from which other universities in Europe have borrowed most of their customs—occurs A.D. 1215. They were completely established A.D. 1231. It is unnecessary to enumerate the several privileges to which Bachelors, Masters, and Doctors were entitled."

The great zeal for learning in England was proved by splendid endowments. Between 1250 and 1400 seven new colleges were founded at Oxford, and nine at Cambridge. The Church viewed the growth of the universities with a mother's pride, and encouraged them in their upward career. Pope Clement V., at the General Council of Vienne, ordered that professorships of Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldaic be established in the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca.*

9. REMARKS ON BRITISH LITERATURE FROM 1066 TO 1350.—We can look for nothing remarkable in the Anglo-Saxon or English literature of this period. All that was learned, valuable, or witty was given to the world in Latin, or occasionally in French. For two hundred years after the Norman Conquest the chief literary productions of England were written in Latin or in French. In fact, the principal English poets for *three hundred years after the Conquest wrote wholly in French*. Out of more than *two hundred and twenty English authors* who wrote between the Conquest and the middle of the fourteenth century, hardly as many names as could be counted on the fingers of one hand left anything worth remembering in their native language.

The key to this state of Saxon literary degradation is furnished by the history of the times. An old British writer bluntly tells us that "French being the language of the polite, and Latin of the learned, nobody could use the common tongue in composition." All the works on philosophy, theology, and history were written in Latin; while all that was intended to

* At the date of the discovery of America, about 8000 students attended the University of Salamanca.

amuse the upper classes and the idlers of the court appeared in French.

But what became of the Anglo-Saxon as a literary language? Obscure and despised, we hear it no more except in the mouths of farmers, peasants, swineherds, and outlaws of the forest. It is no longer, or scarcely, written. In the *Saxon Chronicle* we find that gradually the idiom alters, and is extinguished. The *Chronicle* itself ceases within a century after the Conquest.*

What we call the *Norman Period* extends from the Norman Conquest to the days of Chaucer. It may be separated into two divisions—the *Semi-Saxon Age* and the *Age of Early English*. Under these heads we shall review the principal English writers and the literary monuments which they left behind. But to make this chapter more complete, a bird's-eye view of several of the most distinguished Latin and French authors of the same period is also added.

LESSON I.

THE SEMI-SAXON AGE, A.D. 1150 TO 1250.

1. *The Brut of Layamon.*
 2. *The Ormulum.*
 3. *The Ancren Riwele* (än-krén' ri-üle).
- These are the three principal works written in the English of the Semi-Saxon Age.*

1. Who was Layamon?

He was a patriotic priest of Worcestershire, and the author of the famous poem known as the *Brut*

* Taine.

of *Layamon*, which he translated chiefly from the French.*

2. State its length, merits, and date of composition.

It consists of over 32,000 lines, and is very valuable as a specimen of English in its early form. The date of its composition, though not exactly known, may be fixed about the year 1200.†

3. What is the subject of the Brut of *Layamon*, or, more properly, the Brutus of Britain?

It is a chronicle of British history from the arrival of Brutus—a supposed son of Æneas † of Troy—to the death of the last Celtic prince of England, about the middle of the seventh century.

4. What were *Layamon's* sources for the material of his poem?

(1) The original Celtic poem on the same subject, since lost; (2) a Latin translation of the original by Geoffrey of Monmouth; (3) and a French translation of Geoffrey's Latin one by Wace, a Norman-French poet.

5. What is the *Ormulum*?

The *Ormulum* is a series of metrical homilies having for their subject the Gospels of the various Sundays and holidays in the year.

6. Who was the author?

Orm, a pious and learned English canon of the Order of St. Augustine.

7. Does the *Ormulum* exist entire?

No; out of the whole number of homilies, which

* It is mainly a translation of the *Brut d'Angleterre* (Brutus of England) by Wace, a Norman-French poet.

† The Brut of *Layamon* was first printed in 1847.

‡ Æneas, the hero of Virgil's *Æneid*, was, according to Homer, ranked next to Hector among the heroes of Troy.

must have amounted to nearly *three hundred*, but *thirty-two* remain—a fine fragment of a grand whole.

8. In its present form, of how many lines does the *Ormulum* consist, and what are its merits?

It consists of nearly 20,000 lines; is a real landmark in the history of our language; and, in the literature of this period, is second in importance only to the Brut of *Layamon*.*

9. What do the words "*Anceren Riwele*" signify?

This is the old uncouth way of spelling *Anchoress* † *Rule*.

10. What can you say of this work?

It is a prose work, the author of which is unknown, but he was evidently an ecclesiastic high in authority.

11. Of what does it treat?

It is a somewhat extensive treatise on the rules and duties of the monastic life, written for a number of religious ladies who formed a community in Dorsetshire.

12. What may be said of its vocabulary and the date of its composition?

It contains a larger infusion of Latin words than either the Brut of *Layamon* or the *Ormulum*, and was probably written about the year 1225.

* The *Ormulum* was first printed in 1852. Only one manuscript copy exists.

† An anchoress is a female hermit or recluse.

LESSON II.

THE AGE OF EARLY ENGLISH, A.D. 1250 TO 1350.

1. Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*.
2. Robert Manning's *Chronicle*.
3. THE ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY.

These are the chief literary productions in the English of this age.

13. Who was Robert of Gloucester?

He was a writer about whom we know very little, except that he was a monk of Gloucester Abbey, and the author of a rhyming *Chronicle*.

14. What is the subject of this *Chronicle*?

It is a versified history of England from the time of the imaginary Brutus of Troy till the death of Henry III., A.D. 1272. The *Chronicle* was written about the year 1300.

15. Who was Robert Manning, or Robert of Brunne as he is sometimes called?

He was a learned priest and canon of Brunne, who wrote in the first half of the fourteenth century.

16. Which is his principal work?

A *Chronicle*, which is the most voluminous work written in Early English.

17. Is Manning's *Chronicle* written in prose or in verse, and what period of history does it cover?

It is a metrical history of England from the time of the imaginary Brutus of Troy down to the death of Edward I., A.D. 1307.

18. From what source did Robert of Gloucester and Robert Manning draw largely for the early portions of their *Chronicles*?

From Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Britons*—a famous Latin work of the twelfth century.

19. What may be said of the language and versification of these *Chronicles*?

Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* is written in *twelve-syllable* and Manning's in *eight-syllable* rhyming couplets. Both works—but Manning's especially—show considerable improvement in English over the productions of the Semi-Saxon Age.

20. During what period did *metrical romance*, or the *romances of chivalry*, flourish?

English metrical romance began about the year 1200; but its most flourishing period was during the *fourteenth century*, after which it entirely disappeared as an element of early English literature.

21. To what kind of compositions was the name *metrical romance*, or *romances of chivalry*, given?

To tales of love and adventure *written in verse*.

22. When and by whom were metrical romances introduced into England?

In the *eleventh century*, by the Normans.

23. Were these romances popular during early times?

Strictly speaking, the romances of chivalry were the only popular literature of the Middle Ages, and were patronized by the court and the castle, by the Norman baron and the Saxon gentleman, by the knight and his lady-love.

24. Which were the usual heroes and events in such tales?

Alexander the Great, *Charlemagne*, or oftener *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*; but whatever might be the name, date, or place of the events described, the real subjects were always a tale of love and adventure for the true faith, a tournament,* a troubadour,† a Christian knight, and a pagan foe.

* A mock battle of armed knights.
† One of a school of French poets.

25. What detracts from the merit of English metrical romance?

The want of *originality*; nearly all the English tales are mere imitations or simple translations from the French. We are even left in ignorance of the translators, who thought so little of their own labors as to affix no name to their works.

26. Name a few of the most celebrated of the metrical romances.

King Horn, *King Alexander*, *Sir Tristram*, *Havelock the Dane*, the *Death of Arthur*, and the *Owl and the Nightingale*; the last, especially, being very interesting as the *earliest English poem not copied from some foreign model*.

27. Who revived the metrical romance in modern times?

Sir Walter Scott, though he did it in a form somewhat original.

LESSON III.

PRINCIPAL NORMAN-FRENCH WRITERS OF ENGLAND.
A.D. 1066 TO 1350.

1. *Richard Wace*. Died 1184.
2. *Richard Cœur de Lion*. Died 1199.
3. *Cardinal Langton*. Died 1238.

28. Who stands first among the Norman-French poets?

Richard Wace, a priest, who lived in the reign of Henry II.

29. Which are his chief works?

Two exceedingly long poems—*The Brutus of England** and *The Romance of Rollo*.†

* *Le Brut d'Angleterre*. † *Le Roman de Ron*.—According to Chambers, "neither of these works has the slightest poetical merit. They are both interesting only as showing the state of the French language in the twelfth century, as supplying occasional facts and social traits to the historian."

30. What are the subject, versification, and length of the first of these poems?

The *Brutus of England* is chiefly a metrical translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *History of the Britons*. It is written in eight-syllable verse, and is over 15,000 lines in length.

31. Describe the *Romance of Rollo*.

The *Romance of Rollo* is an epic poem on the first Duke of Normandy—the famous Rollo the Marcher.* It contains the history of the Norman dukes down to Henry II.

32. What two personages celebrated in English history may be mentioned in connection with Norman-French poetry?

King Richard the Lion-hearted and Cardinal Langton.

33. What did King Richard write?

He composed several military songs known as *Sirventes*. A portion of one of these was printed by Horace Walpole in his *Royal and Noble Authors*.

34. By what is Cardinal Langton known to literature?

We possess but one of Cardinal Langton's literary productions—a beautiful little poem, in a manuscript sermon of his, discovered in the British Museum.

LESSON IV.

PRINCIPAL LATIN WRITERS OF ENGLAND. A.D. 1066
TO 1350.

1. *William of Malmesbury*. Died 1144.
2. *Geoffrey of Monmouth*. Died 1154.
3. *John of Salisbury*. Died 1182.
4. *Joseph of Exeter*. Died 1200.
5. *Roger Bacon*. Died 1292.

* So called "because he was of so mighty stature that no horse could bear his weight."

35. Who was William of Malmesbury?

He was a monk of the Abbey of Malmesbury, who, next to Bede, was the greatest historian that England produced in early times.

36. Which are his chief works?

The History of the Kings of England and *The New History*, both written in Latin.

37. Describe these two productions.

The History of the English Kings is a long work in five books, extending from the landing of the Saxons in England till the year 1120; the *New History*, in three books, carries the account down till 1142.

38. What are William of Malmesbury's merits as an historian?

His works are written with care, accuracy, and research; and, for the age in which they were composed, are both learned and philosophical.

39. Who was Geoffrey of Monmouth?

He was a Welsh bishop whose *History of the Britons* is one of the most famous productions of the Middle Ages.

40. What may be said of the *History of the Britons*?

While its historical value seems to be slight, it is forever endeared to the literary mind as a grand storehouse of beautiful Celtic legends which have furnished materials for the masterpieces of some of our greatest poets and prose writers.

41. From what source did Geoffrey of Monmouth obtain the materials for this singular work?

The History of the Britons, it seems, is chiefly a translation of an old Celtic Chronicle, which has since been lost.

42. Name a few of the legends borrowed from this History.

The story of King Lear and his daughters,* Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and many others.

43. Who was John of Salisbury?

He was a learned English bishop and well-known Latin writer of the Middle Ages.

44. What is his chief work?

His chief work is *Polycraticon*, a pleasant and learned treatise on the "frivolities of courtiers and the footsteps of philosophers."

45. What Englishman is esteemed the best Latin poet of this period?

A gifted monk of Exeter Abbey, commonly known as *Joseph of Exeter*.

46. What is his principal work?

An epic poem entitled *The Trojan War*. It is written in elegant Latin.

47. Who was Roger Bacon?

He was a native of England, a learned Franciscan Father, and the most famous philosopher of his age.

48. Which is his chief work?

The Opus Majus (or "Greater Work"), a celebrated production which has been styled the encyclopædia of the thirteenth century.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER III.

1. With the Norman Conquest there was introduced into England a new order of things, social, political, and literary.

2. The 2,000,000 inhabitants of England were still

* This story is the foundation of Shakspeare's great tragedy of *King Lear*.

Saxons, but their rulers were Normans, and Norman-French became the language of the Court and the Castle.

3. Cardinal Langton and the Catholic barons forced King John to sign the Magna Charta on the famous field of Runnymede, A.D. 1215.

4. The first English parliament met A.D. 1265.

5. The commerce of Europe dates from the Crusades, which gave a great impulse to art, science, and literature.

6. Gothic or Christian architecture dates from the Middle Ages, often styled "the Ages of Faith."*

7. Lanfranc and St. Anselm began the revival of learning in England in the Middle Ages.

8. The Norman rulers of England were great patrons of learning. From the date of the Conquest to the signing of the Magna Charta—about 150 years—557 monasteries were founded in England. These were all houses of education.

9. To the Catholic Church we owe the revival of the arts, sciences, and literature. History admits of no doubt on this point.

* Nowadays shallow or blindly prejudiced authors write of them as the "Dark Ages"; but the darkness is in themselves, not in the "Ages of Faith." The "Dark Ages" never had any existence save in unenlightened skulls and diseased imaginations. It is to those much calumniated ages that we must trace the origin of the following inventions and improvements: (1) organs and bells in churches; (2) the mariner's compass, which prepared the way for the discovery of America; (3) banks and double-entry book-keeping; (4) post-offices; (5) spectacles for the use of the eyes; (6) clocks; (7) gunpowder; (8) computation from the birth of Christ; (9) the Gothic style of architecture; (10) the *gamut* in music; (11) oil-painting; (12) the making of *paper* from linen rags; (13) modern commerce; (14) all our modern languages; (15) rhyme and the beginning of modern poetry; (16) water-mills; (17) glass windows for churches; (18) the manufacture of silk; (19) the great universities; (20) the art of printing.

10. The doors of the monastic schools were open to all—rich and poor alike.

11. The great universities of Europe, under the fostering care of the Church, began to take shape in the thirteenth century.

12. The most renowned of the ancient universities were those of Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge, and Salamanca.

13. Between A.D. 1250 and 1400 *seven* new colleges were founded at Oxford and *nine* at Cambridge.

14. The degraded condition and unformed state of the English language during the Norman Period warn us that we need look for nothing great in the native literature of that time.

15. With few exceptions, the famous writers of that period gave their ideas to the world in a Latin or a French dress.

16. The chief productions written in the crude and unformed English of the time, for 200 years after the Norman Conquest, were (1) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, (2) *The Brut of Layamon*, (3) *The Ormulum*, and (4) *The Ancren Riwele*.

17. The chief literary productions written in Early English (1250–1350) were Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, Robert Manning's *Chronicle*, and the metrical tales known as the *Romances of Chivalry*.

18. The principal English historian of the Norman Period was William of Malmesbury, who wrote in Latin.

19. Joseph of Exeter is esteemed the best Latin poet of that age.

20. Roger Bacon is regarded as one of the most profound philosophers of the Middle Ages. His works are all in Latin.