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AN ESSAY

ON THE STATE OF

LITERATURE AND LEARNING

UNDER THE

ANGLO-SAXONS.

London: J. B. Nichols and Son, Printers, 25, Parliament Street.

WRIGHT, Thomas

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OF THE

BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA LITERARIA,

TO BE PUBLISHED UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE.

In the Anniversary Address of the President of the Royal Society of Literature, in April 1838, it was recommended that, in pursuance of one of the objects designated in its charter, viz. "the publication of works of great intrinsic value," the Society should publish periodically, under the immediate superintendence of the Council, a *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, arranged in chronological order, and forming an entire Literary History of the United Kingdom, beginning with the commencement of the Anglo-Saxon period. An extract from a document drawn up by a member of the Council, and introduced into the Earl of Ripon's address, will best describe the motives which led to this undertaking.

"I would recommend the publication in parts by, or rather under the superintendence of, the Council of the Royal Society of Literature, of a biographical series, not in the ordinary inartificial and imperfect plan of alphabetical arrangement, but in chronological order, thus obviating the inconvenience of the anachronism which occurs between the early and late volumes of a long set, as is the case in Chalmers's Dictionary, which occupied upwards of five years in publication; in consequence of which, notices were given in the latter volumes of persons who had long survived others of whom no mention whatever is made in the earlier sections of the work, while a still greater anachronism occurs from the juxta-position of men who flourished at the most remote periods from one another; by which means Alfred and Akenside, Wickliff and Wilmot, Chaucer and Chatterton, are jumbled together in very absurd discrepancy.

"Another defect of biographical dictionaries is the attempt to render them

universal, as to all nations, and as to every description of notoriety of character.

"I would endeavour to obviate both these sources of imperfection, by making the proposed biography purely national, and arranging it chronologically by centuries, on which plan each volume might be considered a separate work. The volumes might even be published simultaneously, or, beginning with recent centuries, work upwards to the source; and, in either case, the work would admit of indefinite continuance with the lapse of time, while the earlier portions would never become obsolete, or lose their relative value, as has invariably been the fate of all alphabetical biographies.

"The only attempt on any adequate scale at a national biography, was by the publication, between the years 1747 and 1766, of a 'Biographia Britannica,' of which an enlarged edition was in 1777 undertaken by Dr. Kippis and others, and slowly continued until the year 1793, when it ceased to appear, having proceeded no further than the letter E. Independent of its vicious alphabetical arrangement, and its bulk and uncertain periods of publication, enough of cause for its non-acceptance by the public, and consequent abrupt termination, would be found in its injudicious plan of giving the entire text of the former edition, and appending an immense quantity of elaborate and controversial notes, after the manner, but destitute of the critical acumen, of Bayle. A Dictionary of General Biography was soon afterwards compiled and edited by Drs. Aikin and Enfield, without, however, establishing any claim to distinction in the literary world. Another mode of improving on the crude and desultory character of all existing large works in general biography, would be by a classification of the lives according to the different branches of literature and science to which they were devoted; but this would be attended with great difficulty, in consequence of the versatile pursuits of many distinguished geniuses, who, like Julius Cæsar, or our own Alfred, have earned laurels in every field of fame.

"On the whole, therefore, I would repeat the expression of my predilection in favour of the scheme I have proposed; namely, a purely national biography, deduced chronologically from the first dawnings of British genius in the seventh century, to the mature but, I trust, still far from declining splendour of its emanations in the nineteenth."

Since that period the Council of the Society have been occupied in considering the best means of carrying this undertaking into effect; they have established a separate publication-fund to meet the necessary expenses, and they are now able to lay before the public the plan which has been adopted, whilst, at the same time, they publish separately the Essay introductory to the first Section of the proposed work.

Our first great publications of this description were built upon exceedingly defective materials, and succeeding biographers have done little more than compile from the works

of those who went before them. In the earlier ages of our Literary History this defect is more strongly felt; for numerous names, of which England may still be justly proud, and for whose biography there is no want of materials among the stores of our public and private libraries, are either entirely omitted, or find a brief and unsatisfactory notice. With the intention of remedying this evil, those sources will be examined, whether edited or inedited, which may best contribute to the success of the present undertaking; the biography of each person will be accompanied with a succinct account of his works, and followed by a reference to the Collections, in which they may be found in Manuscript, and with complete bibliographical lists of the editions of such works as have been printed.

Our Literary History naturally divides itself into several sections, each of which is perfectly distinct in itself, and might very well form a separate work. In order to render these different sections as interesting as possible to the general reader, to furnish a scale by which he may estimate more readily the comparative positions occupied by the different names which occur in them, and to give historical completeness to the whole, each section will be preceded by an introductory Essay on the Literary Character of the age, and will close with a supplementary account of the chief anonymous productions, as well as of the writers of less note, in the several departments of Literature which have distinguished it.

The large materials which exist, though hitherto little used, for the Literary Biography of the Anglo-Saxon period, which extends from the beginning of the seventh century to the middle of the eleventh, and includes the great luminaries of the English Church in its infancy, the profound scholars of the age of Bede and Alcuin, and the Literary and Scientific contemporaries of King Alfred and Dunstan, will probably occupy two volumes. The second Section, the Anglo-Norman Period, extending from the Conquest to the close of the twelfth century, the most brilliant literary portion of the

Middle Ages, will probably furnish two volumes more. The thirteenth century, though perhaps the period in which Science flourished most, including among others, the great names of Robert Grosteste and Roger Bacon, whilst it was also the age most fertile in Anglo-Norman Poetry, was less remarkable than the preceding century for its literary productions. A single volume might comprise this period; and another would be sufficient for the two following centuries; at the conclusion of which the modern *Literary History of England* may be considered as commencing.

Royal Society of Literature,
April 25, 1839.

An Essay on the State of Literature and Learning under the Anglo-Saxons, introductory to the first Section of this work, is published in a separate form, and to be had of Charles Knight, 22, Ludgate Street, and Messrs. Rivington, 3, Waterloo Place, Regent Street.

Price Half a Crown.

J. B. Nichols and Son, Printers, 25, Parliament-street.

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INTRODUCTORY TO THE FIRST SECTION OF THE

BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA LITERARIA

OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE.

BY

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LONDON:

CHARLES KNIGHT, 22, LUDGATE-STREET; RIVINGTONS,
WATERLOO PLACE, AND ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

1839.

AN ESSAY

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STATE OF LITERATURE AND LEARNING

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It may truly be asserted that the literature of no other country can boast of the preservation of such a long and uninterrupted series of memorials as that of England. Even through the early ages of Saxon rule, though at times the chain is slender, yet it is not broken. We want neither the heroic song in which the *scóp* or poet told the venerable traditions of the fore-world to the chieftains assembled on the "mead-bench," nor the equally noble poems in which his successor sang the truths as well as the legends of Christianity. We have history and biography as they came from the pen of the Saxon writers, science, such as was then known, set down by those who professed it, and these written sometimes in the language of their fathers; whilst at other times they are clothed in that tongue which the missionaries had introduced, and in which the learning of Bede and Alcuin was revered, when the Saxon language was no longer understood. We have the doctrine of the church, both as it was discussed among its profoundest teachers, and as it was presented in simpler form to the ears of the multitude. Lastly, amongst the

numerous manuscripts which the hand of time has spared to us, the lighter literature of our Saxon forefathers presents itself continually under many varying forms.

§ I. *Anglo-Saxon Poetry and Romance.*

1. The first records of the Anglo-Saxons carry us back to that state of society in which all literature is comprised under the one characteristic head of poetry; and all literary genius centres in one person, the minstrel, who equally composed and sang. This was the literature which, in the year 449, the Saxons brought with them into our island; and during the first period of their establishment poetry held a high rank both by its comparative importance and by its own intrinsic beauties. Life itself, and the language of life, were in those early ages essentially poetic; man lived and acted according to his impulses and passions; he was unacquainted with the business-like movements and feelings of more civilized existence; when he was not occupied in imitating the famous deeds of his forefathers, he listened to the words of the minstrel who celebrated them. The song in which were told the gigantic movements of an earlier period, already clothed in a traditionary garb of the supernatural, was the instrument to which his mind owed its culture; his very conversation was moulded upon it, and even in the transactions of the council he spake in poetry. Among the many examples of the poetic feeling of the Saxons, furnished by old historians, Bede gives us one which is peculiarly beautiful. When Paulinus preached the doctrines of Christ before the court of King Edwin, one of his nobles arose and said, "Thou hast seen, O King, when the fire blazed, and the hall was warm, and thou wast seated at the feast amid thy nobles, whilst the winter storm raged

without, and the snow fell, how some solitary sparrow has flown through, scarcely entered at one door before it disappeared by the other. Whilst it is in the hall it feels not the storm, but, after the space of a moment, it returns to whence it came, and thou beholdest it no longer, nor knowest where or to what it may be exposed. Such, as it appears to me, is the life of man, a short moment of enjoyment, and we know not whence we came, nor whither we are going. If this new doctrine brings us any greater certitude of the future, I for one vote for its adoption."*

2. The Poet, or Minstrel, was held in high esteem among the Saxons. His genius was looked upon as a birth-right, not an acquired art, and it obtained for him everywhere the respect and protection of the great and the powerful. His place was in the hall of princes, where he never failed to earn admiration and applause, attended generally with advantages of a more substantial nature. The early poem of Beowulf affords us many evidences of the high place which poetry held amongst the enjoyments of life. If the poet would paint to us the joy which reigned in the royal hall of Heorot, he tells us of the song that resounded there—

scóp hwílum sang	meanwhile the poet sang
hádor on Heorote.	serene in Heorot.

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 987.)

As, on the contrary, the absence of the wonted minstrelsy is a sure sign of sorrow and distress—

næs hearpan wyn,	there is no joy of the harp,
gomen gleó-beámes.	no pleasure of the musical-wood.†

(*v.* 4519.)

The poetry of the Anglo-Saxons has preserved to us many traits of the character and office of the ancient

* Bede, Hist. Eccles. Angl. Lib. II. cap. 13.

† *i. e.* the harp.

minstrel. He was sometimes a household retainer of the chief whom he served, as we see in the poem of Beowulf; sometimes he wandered through different countries, visiting the courts of various princes. Thus in a fragment of some old romance, which is preserved in the Exeter manuscript, and which has been frequently printed under the title of the Traveller's Song,* a minstrel is introduced enumerating the various lands which he had seen in his wanderings, and he concludes with the following reflection—

swá scríþende	Thus wandering
ge-sceapum hweorfaþ	in the world
gleó-men gumena	the glee-men go about
geond grunda fela,	through many nations,
þearfe secgaþ,	they say their wants,
þonc-word sprecaþ,	speak words of thankfulness,
simle súþ oþþe norþ	ever south or north
sumne ge-métaþ	they meet some one
gydda gleáwne,	skilful in songs,
geofum un-hneáwne,	un-sparing of gifts,
se þe fore dúguþe wile	who before his nobility will
dóm á-ræ'ran,	raise his sway,
eorl-scipe æfnan,	will perform earlship,
oþþæt eal scaceþ	until all flitteth
leóht and líf somod.	light and life together.
Lóf se ge-wyrceþ	He who worketh praise
hafaþ under heofonum	hath under the heavens
heáh-fæstne dóm.	high-established sway.

It was the minstrel's duty, not only to tell the mythic history of the earlier ages, but to relate contemporary events, and to clothe in poetry the deeds which fell under his eye, to turn into derision the coward or the vanquished enemy, and to laud and exalt the conduct of his patrons. No sooner has Beowulf accomplished the defeat of the terrible Grendel, than the household bard of Hrothgar,

* First by Conybeare, in his Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, and afterwards by Kemble in his Edition of Beowulf, by Leo in his Altsächsische und Angelsächsische Sprachproben, and by Guest in the History of English Rythms.

whose memory was filled with old traditions, commences a new song on the hero's success.

hwílum cyninges þegn,	sometimes the king's thane,
guma gilp-hlæden,	a man laden with lofty themes,
gidda ge-myndig,	mindful of songs,
(se þe eal-fela	(he who a great multitude
eald-ge-segena	of old traditions
worn ge-munde,	remembered,
word óþer fand	who invented other words,
sóðe ge-bunden,)	truly joined together),
secg eft on-gan	this man now began
síð Beó-wulfes	Beowulf's expedition
snyttrum styrian.	skilfully to put in order.

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 1728.)

Thus the minstrel became endowed with another function; it was by means of his songs that the intelligence of contemporary events was, in the earlier ages, carried from one court to another. In this way Beowulf became acquainted with the sufferings of the Danes, under the visitation of the Grendel:—

for ðam [syððan] wearð	therefore it afterwards became
ylda-bearnum	to the sons of men
un-dyrne cúð,	openly known,
gyddum geomore.	mournfully *in songs*.

(*v.* 297.)

At times the Bard raised his song to higher themes, and laid open the sacred story of the cosmogony, and the beginning of all things. Thus, when the warriors were joyful in Heorot—

þær wæs hearpan swég,	there was noise of the harp,
swútol sang scópes:	the clear song of the poet.
sægde se þe cúþe	one said that knew
frum-sceaft fira	the origin of men
feorran reccan;	from a remote period to relate;
cwæð þæt se æl-mihtiga	he said that the Almighty
eorðan w[orhte],	wrought the earth,
wlíte-beorhtne wang	the bright-faced plain
swá wæter be-búgeð;	which water encompasseth;
ge-sette síge-hreþig	exulting in victory he set up
sunn[an] and monan,	the sun and the moon;

leóman to leóhte	luminaries to light
land bú[en]dum ;	the inhabitants of the land ;
and ge-frætwade	and adorned
foldan sceátas	the districts of the earth
leomum and leáfum :	with boughs and leaves :
líf eác ge-sceóp	life also he created
cy[n]na ge-hwylcum	for all kinds
þára ðe cwice hwyrfaþ.	that go about alive.

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 178.)

3. These minstrel-poets had, by degrees, composed a large mass of national poetry, which formed collectively one grand mythic cycle. Their education consisted chiefly in committing this poetry to memory, and it was thus preserved from age to age. They rehearsed such portions of it as might be asked for by the hearers, or as the circumstances of the moment might require, for it seems certain that they were in the habit of singing detached scenes even of particular poems, just as we are told was done with the works of Homer in the earlier times of Greece. Thus in Beowulf, on one occasion, the subject selected by the Bard as most appropriate, is Offa's expedition against Finn, a romance of which, singularly enough, we have still a fragment left,*—

ðær wæs sang and swég	There was song and sound
samod æt-gædere,	all together,
fore Healf-denes	before Healfdene's
hilde-wísan,	chieftains ;
gomen-wudu gréted,	the wood of joy was touched,
gid oft wrecen :	the song often sung :
ðonne heal-gamen	then joy in the hall
Hróþ-gáres scóp	Hrothgar's poet
æfter medo-bence	along the mead-bench
mæ'nan scolde,	must excite,
Finnes eaferum	concerning Finn's descendants,
ðá híe se fæ'r be-geat.	when the expedition came upon them.

(*v.* 2119.)

* The circumstance of our having a part of the very romance which the bard is introduced singing, gives a singular air of verity to the pictures of early manners in this interesting poem. The fragment first printed by Hickes, and reprinted in Kemble's Beowulf under the title of "The Battle

In their passage from one minstrel to another, these poems underwent successive changes; and, since, like the religion taught by the priests, the poetry belonged to the whole class, without being known severally as the work of this or that individual, it happens that all the Anglo-Saxon national poetry is anonymous. In like manner, the question as to the authors of most of the poetry of the early Grecian cycles was among the Greeks themselves a matter of great uncertainty. The practice of singing detached pieces also accounts for the fragments of larger poems which are still found in manuscripts; the famous Exeter manuscript is chiefly made up of such pieces. Beowulf bears internal evidence of having passed through many hands in its way from the age of paganism in which it was certainly moulded, up to that when among minstrels who held a better religion, it received the various adventitious traits of Christianity which we now find in it. The "Traveller's Song" seems to have been preserved as a kind of nomenclature of geography; and, as might be expected, it is full of interpolations, by the addition of the names of countries, of which the knowledge was brought in by the Christian writers.

4. The poetry of the Anglo-Saxons was neither modulated according to foot-measure, like that of the Greeks and Romans, nor written with rhymes, like that of many modern languages. Its chief and universal characteristic was a very regular *alliteration*, so arranged that, in every couplet, there should be two principal words in the first

of Finnesburh," was found by the former, as he says, in a MS. of semi-Saxon Homilies in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. It has since been sought there more than once, but without success. Perhaps it was the leaf pasted down in the binding of some MS. which belonged to a very different subject; and, if this be the case, it is certainly very desirable that it should be found, as, by separating it from the cover, more might possibly be discovered than Hickes was aware of.

line beginning with the same letter, which letter must also be the initial of the first word on which the stress of the voice falls in the second line. The only approach to a metrical system yet discovered is that two risings and two fallings of the voice seem necessary to each perfect line. Two distinct measures are met with, a shorter and a longer, both commonly mixed together in the same poem, the former being used for the ordinary narrative, and the latter adopted when the poet sought after greater dignity. In the manuscripts, the Saxon poetry is always written continuously like prose, perhaps for the sake of convenience, but the division of the lines is generally marked by a point. Some Anglo-Saxon scholars, and the Germans more particularly, have advocated the printing of the alliterative couplet in one line, while others are equally zealous for its separation into two. This is, perhaps, more a matter of taste than of great importance, though the mode, now generally adopted, of dividing the alliterations into couplets, seems to be countenanced both by the pointing of the manuscripts, and by the circumstance that, if the longer metres be arranged according to the other method, the length of the lines becomes rather inconvenient and unseemly. The harmony and alliteration of the lines, as well as the dividing points, are often lost in the manuscripts by the inaccuracy of the scribes.

5. The Anglo-Saxon poetry has come down to us in its own native dress. In unskilful hands it sometimes became little more than alliterative prose; but, as far as it is yet known to us, it never admitted any adventitious ornaments. Having been formed in a simple state of society, it admits, by its character, no great variety of style, but generally marches on in one continued strain of pomp and grandeur, to which the Anglo-Saxon language itself was in its perfect state peculiarly suited. The principal charac-

teristic of this poetry is an endless variety of epithet and metaphor, which are in general very expressive, although their beauty sometimes depends so much on the feelings and manners of the people for whom they were made, that they appear to us rather fanciful. As, however, these poets drew their pictures from nature, the manner in which they apply their epithets, like the rich colouring of the painter, produces a brilliant and powerful impression on the mind. They are, moreover, exceedingly valuable to the modern reader, for they make him acquainted with the form, colour, material, and every other attribute of the things which are mentioned. Thus, when the hero shows himself, a long description could not give a more exact idea of his apparel than is here conveyed in a few words—

Beówulf maðelode ;	Beowulf spake ;
on him byrne scán,	on him the coat of mail shone,
sea[ro]-net seówed	the war-net sowed
smiþes or-þancum.	by the skill of the armourer.

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 804.)

When the poet describes Beowulf's approach, with his attendants, to the Danish capital, we see even the path they are treading, and the clank of their armour seems to ring in our ears—

Stræ't wæs stán-fáh,	The street was variegated with stones,
stíg wísode	the path directed
gumum æt-gædere.	the men together.
gúð-byrne scán,	The war-mail shone,
heard hond-locen ;	hard hand-locked ;
hring-iren scír	the bright ring-iron
song in searwum,	sang in their trappings,
þá híe tó sele furðum	when they forward to the hall
in hyra gry're-geatwum	in their terrible armour
gangan cwomon.	proceeded on their way.

(*v.* 637.)

So, likewise, in Beowulf's desperate encounter with the unearthly Grendel, whom no weapons could injure, when

he tears the monster's arm from the shoulder, the poet dwells on the momentary act of separation till we seem to feel the crash :—

hím on eaxle wearð	On his shoulder became
syn-dolh sweótol ;	a mighty gash evident,
seonowe on-sprungon,	the sinews sprang asunder,
burston bán-locan.	the juncture of the bones burst.

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 1626.)

The metaphors also often possess much original beauty. Thus, an enemy is not slain—he is *put to sleep with the sword.* So it was with the nicors whom Beowulf had destroyed in the sea; and they were found not on the shore—but near the *leavings of the waves* :—

ac on mergenne	But in the morning
mecum wunde	wounded with blades
be y'ð-láfe	beside the leavings of the waves
uppe læ'gon,	they lay aloft,
swe[ordum] á-swefede.	put to sleep with swords.

(*v.* 1124.)

When a hero died in peace, he *went on his way.* So Beowulf's father—

ge-bád wintra worn,	he abode for many a year,
æ'r he on weg hwurfe	ere he went on his way,
gamol of geardum.	old, from his dwellings.

(*v.* 525.)

Men's passions and feelings are sometimes depicted with great beauty. What can be more simple and elegant, and at the same time more natural and pathetic, than Hrothgar's lamentation over his old and faithful counseller, whom unexpectedly the Grendel's mother had slain ?—

Hróð-gár maþelode,	Hrothgar spake,
helm Scyldinga :	the protector of the Scyldings:
ne frin þú æfter sæ'lum,—	" Ask not thou after happiness,—
sorh is ge-niwod	sorrow is renewed
Denigea leódum ;	to the Danish people ;
deád is Æsc-here	dead is Æschere

Yrmen-láfes	Yrmenlaf's
yldra bróþor,	elder brother,
mín rún-wita,	the partaker of my secrets,
and mín ræ'd-bora,	and my counsellor,
eaxl-ge-stealla	who stood at my elbow*
ðonne we on or-lege	when we in battle
hafelan wéredon,	guarded our hoods of mail,
þonne hniton feþan	when troops rushed together,
eoferas cnysedan;	and helmets clashed;
[á] scolde eorl wesan	ever should an earl be
æ'r-gód swylc Æsc-here.	valiant as Æschere.
Wearð him on Herote	Of him in Heorot
tó hand-banan	a cunning fatal-guest
wæl-gæst wæfre.	has become the slaughterer.
* * *	* * *
nú seó hand lig[eð],	Now the hand lieth low,
se þe eów wel hwylcra	which was good to you all
wilna dóhte.	for all your desires."

(*Beowulf*, *v.* 2642.)

The anxiety of Beowulf and his people, after the aged warrior had fought his last battle, and destroyed his last enemy, that his barrow should be raised on an eminence overlooking the sea, that it might be a mark to sailors—

ge-worhton ða	wrought then
Wedra leóde	the people of the Westerns
hlæ'w on líde,	a mound over the sea,
se wæs heáh and brád,	it was high and broad
eð-líðendum	to the seafaring men
wíde tó-syne.	to be seen afar—

(*v.* 6306.)

reminds us of a similar sentiment, in an early Greek poet, when speaking of the tomb of Themistocles, which he represents as overlooking the Piræus, and

* It is curious to observe the similarity of sentiment and expression which is often found recurring under similar circumstances. In the metrical life of Merlin, attributed to Geoffrey of Monmouth, the hero laments his friend and companion in arms in almost the same words as are here put into the mouth of Hrothgar (*Vit. Merl. v.* 46)—

"O juvenile decus! quis nunc astabit in armis
Nunc mihi pone latus, mecumque repellet euntes
In mea dampna duces, incumbentesque catervas."

which would seem, like Beowulf's, to have been a large tumulus* :—

> Ὁ σὸς δὲ τύμβος ἐν καλῷ κεχωσμένος
> Τοῖς ἐμπόροις πρόσρησις ἔσται πανταχοῦ,
> Τούς τ' ἐκπλέοντας εἰσπλέοντάς τ' ὄψεται,
> Χὠπόταν ἅμιλλα τῶν νεῶν θεάσεται.
>
> There shall thy mound, conspicuous on the shore,
> Salute the mariners who pass the sea,
> Keep watch on all who enter or depart,
> And be the umpire in the naval strife.

Similes are very rare in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The whole romance of Beowulf contains only five, and those are of the simplest kind; the vessel gliding swiftly over the waves is compared to a bird; the Grendel's eyes to fire; his nails to steel; the light which Beowulf finds in the Grendel's dwelling, under the waters, resembles the serene light of the sun; and the sword which has been bathed in the monster's blood melts immediately "like ice." In the religious poetry such comparisons are not more common.

6. The Romances of the Anglo-Saxons hold historically the same place in literature which belongs to the Iliad or the Odyssey.† Their subjects were either exclusively mythological, or historical facts, which, in their passage by tradition from age to age, had taken a mythic form. Beowulf himself is, probably, little more than a fabulous personage—another Hercules destroying monsters of

* Plato Comicus, ap. Plutarch. in vita Themist.

† To the comparison already made between the earliest poetry of Greece and that of England, it may be added that the names given to a minstrel, *scóp* on the one hand, from *scapan*, to make, and, on the other, ποιητὴς, from ποιεῖν, are identically the same, and, indicating a consciousness of the creative faculty of the poet, differ entirely from the *trobador*, and *trouvère*, of a later period of mediæval poetry. The Anglo-Scottish poetry of the fifteenth century was merely an imitation of the English of the thirteenth and fourteenth, and their *makkar*, or *maker*, can only be conceived to have merited his name by the old rule of *lucus a non lucendo*, because he borrowed his materials ready-made.

every description, natural or supernatural, nicors, ogres, grendels, dragons. No weak or selfish feelings ever interfere with his straight course of heroic probity. Courage, generosity, and fidelity are his virtues. The coward, the niggard, and the traitor, whenever they are mentioned, are spoken of with strong marks of abhorrence. The weaker sex, though it has scarcely any share in the action, is always treated with extreme delicacy and respect. The plot of the poem is at once simple and bold. Among the other romances, that of Finn had for its subject the mutual injury of two hostile tribes, and acts of vengeance repeated until the one was vanquished and became dependent on the other. Sometimes the ladies stand forth as more active and powerful agents. Thus the romance of Offa was founded on the marriage of a king with a wood-nymph, and the hatred with which she was regarded by his mother,—a story frequently reproduced in the romances of the thirteenth century. The old German romance of the Niebelungen has for its subject the disastrous consequences which arose out of the vanity and petulance of two royal dames. The subject of that of Waltharius, preserved to us only in a Latin dress, is the escape of a prince and his affianced bride from the court of the Huns, where they had been detained as hostages.*

7. The only perfect monument of Anglo-Saxon romance, which the hand of time has left us, is Beowulf. In it we discover, what was rendered more than probable by other considerations, that, after the Saxons had embraced Christianity, they carefully weeded out from their national poetry all mention of, or allusion to, those personages of the earlier mythology, whom their forefathers had

* The curious poem of Waltharius has been lately printed more accurately than in the older editions, by Grimm and Schmeller, in their *Lateinische Gedichte des X. and XI. Jh.*

worshipped as Gods. But they went no further than this; the subordinate beings of the ancient superstition, the elves, nicors, and all the fantastic creatures of the popular creed, still held their places; for the Christian missionaries themselves believed in the spiritual and unseen world as extensively as their converts. The only difference was, that, whilst elsewhere these beings retained very nearly their original form and character, in the minds of the monks they became so many black demons and mischievous hobgoblins.*

8. That the early romances continued to be popular throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, is proved by many circumstances. Indeed their heroes were in most instances the direct ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon princes, and they must therefore always have been listened to with attention. Many of the nobles appear to have had such romances attached to the early history of their own families, as was the case with Waltheof.† That they formed part of the poetry in which King Alfred, from his youth, took so much pleasure, is proved by the manner in which he introduces the name of Weland, one of the most renowned personages of the Teutonic mythology, into his translation of Boethius. The manuscript of Beowulf, and those which contain the fragments that remain of other romances, are all of the tenth century, the age in which chiefly the Anglo-Saxon vernacular literature was committed to writing, which shows that they were then popular. As late as the time of the Norman conquest, we are told of

* The history of the influence of Monkish Christianity on the popular Mythology of the Anglo Saxons is developed more at large (by the writer of the present essay) in an article on *Friar Rush and the Frolicsome Elves*, in the Foreign Quarterly Review for 1837, vol. xviii. p. 180.

† The life of Waltheof is printed in the second volume of the Chroniques Anglo-Normandes: Frere, Rouen, 1839.

one of the companions of the Saxon Hereward, who had been named Godwin, "because he was as valiant as Godwin the son of Guthlac, who was so highly extolled *in the fables of the Ancients*,"* a clear proof of their general popularity at that time. And at the same time, as we learn from Hereward's anonymous biographer, there was one Leofric, "his presbyter at Bourne," who seems to have still exercised in part the craft of the minstrel, or *scóp*; for "it was his occupation to collect the deeds of the giants and warriors out of the fables of the Ancients, or from the accurate relation of others, for the edification of his hearers, and to write them in English in order to preserve them."† Leofric appears to have acted, in some measure, as the bard of Hereward's family.

9. We not only trace the preservation of these romances down to a comparatively late period, but we can discover marks of their continued influence in various ways. From time to time we detect them interweaving themselves with the graver recitals of the historian. As the Saxons became in course of time more and more firmly settled in, and identified with, Britain, their recollections of their old country became continually less vivid, the traditions connected with it less definite, and they began to forget the meaning of many of the old legends, although they were still punctually handed down from father to son. In ages like those of which we are now speaking—indeed more or less in all ages—the popular mind ever connects its traditions with some object which is constantly before the

* Godwinus Gille, qui vocabatur Godwinus, quia non impar Godwino filio Guthlaci, qui in fabulis antiquorum valde prædicatur.—*De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis*, p. 50.

† .... editum a Lefrico diacono ejusdem ad Brun presbitero. Hujus enim memorati presbiteri erat studium, omnes actus gigantum et bellatorum ex fabulis antiquorum, aut ex fideli relatione, ad edificationem audientium congregare, et ob memoriam Angliæ literis commendare.—Ib. p. 2.

eye, and thus the old romances were associated with new places. A particular tribe, who had brought with them some ancient legend, the real scene of which lay upon the shores of the Baltic, after they had been settled for a time in England, began to look upon it as a story connected only with the spot where they now dwelt, and to perpetuate the error by giving the name of its hero to some object in their vicinity. Thus came such names as Grimesby in Lincolnshire, Wade's-Castle in the North, which took their names, one from Havelok's supposed foster-father, the other from a Saxon or northern hero, whose legend appears at present to be lost, although it was still preserved little more than two centuries ago. Thus, too, the legend of Weland was located in Berkshire. It was in this way that the Ongles, or Angles, settled at an earlier period near Sleswic, became by degrees confounded with the East-Angles in England; and thus the romance of Offa, one of the ancient Angle princes or "heroes," was under the hand of the historian Matthew Paris transformed into a life of Offa, King of the Angles in our island. Some such process seems to have produced the more modern romance of Havelok, that of King Atla still preserved in Anglo-Norman and Latin, though in either form inedited, and perhaps all the other Anglo-Norman romances which form the cycle commonly attributed to the period of the Danish invasions, such as Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton, and King Horn. In more than one instance we find the events of some older family romance mixed up with the life of an historical personage. Such, no doubt, was the origin of the history of Hereward's younger days, which his biographer acknowledges to be taken from what appears to have been a poem, written by Leofric of Bourne; and there are several incidents in it which are most remarkably similar to some parts of the romance of

Horn, just mentioned. These were not the most humiliating transformations to which, in the course of ages, the Anglo-Saxon romances were condemned: as they had been originally formed in the childhood of nations, so at a later period they re-appeared in the form of chap-books and ballads for the amusement of *children;* and it is more than probable that the great god Thor, the never-ceasing enemy of the Giants of the old Teutonic mythology, has degenerated into that popular but no less remarkable hero of the nursery, the famous Jack-the-Giant-Killer, the all-powerful hammer and the girdle of strength of the god having been replaced by the equally efficient sword of sharpness and the cap of invisibility.

§ II. *The Anglo-Saxon Christian Poetry.*

1. The introduction of Christianity laid open to the Saxons a new field of literary labour, and its influence was exerted immediately on the national poetry. On their first arrival, at the end of the sixth century, the missionaries were treated with respect. They soon made converts rapidly, and the new religion was received even among the princes and nobles with a warmth of zeal which was imparted, more or less, through many generations to their descendants, in whose writings we meet with frequent expressions of reverence and gratitude towards those who had first reclaimed them from the errors of paganism.* The minstrels now found that a song of scripture lore was more attentively listened to than the

* The inedited Prose Menology says of St. Gregory,—He is ure *altor*, and we syndan his *alumni;* ðæt is ðæt he is ure fester-fæder on Criste, and we syndon his fester-bearn on full-wihte. (MS. Cotton. Julius, A. x. fol. 71.) *He is our* altor, *and we are his* alumni; *that is, that he is our foster-father in Christ, and we are his foster-children in baptism.* The Metrical Meno-

traditionary exploits of their own national heroes; and thus a new class of subjects became popular, though dressed in the same style of poetry to which their hearers had been so long accustomed. The zeal of many of the more influential converts led them, probably, to encourage these compositions by all the means in their power. The subjects thus chosen were generally detached stories from the Old Testament, such as the history of the Creation and the fall of the Angels, the story of Judith, or of Nebuchadonosor, or were founded on the doctrines and prophecies of the New Testament, as the Harrowing of Hell, and the Day of Judgment, with all its terrors for the wicked and its glories for the good; sometimes they were

logy, reprinted from Hickes by the Rev. S. Fox (8vo. Pickering, 1830), says of St. Augustine (l. 200)—

Ne hyrde ic guman awyrn	I have not heard anywhere
ænigne ær	that any man
æfre bringan	ever brought
ofer sealtne mere	over the briny sea
selran lare,—	better doctrine,—
bisceop bremran.	a more illustrious bishop.

In a MS. of the tenth century (MS. Cotton. Cleop. B. XIII. fol. 89, v°) is preserved the following short hymn on the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons:

Sanctus papa Gregorius,
Augustini didascalus,
Dum per eum multimoda
Nosset geri miracula,
Et Saxonum cor saxeum
Fateri Christum dominum,
Proventu euvangelicæ
Exhilaratus vineæ,
Psallebat hoc celeumate
Divino tactus pneumate.
Ecce lingua Britanniæ,
Frendens olim barbarie,
In Trinitate unica
Jam alleluia personat,
Proventu euvangelicæ
[Exhilarata vineæ!]

taken from later legends, like those of St. Andrew and of the finding of the Cross, or others still more remote from scriptural truth, as that of the Phœnix. These subjects were worked out and embellished by the imagination of the poet, and were not unfrequently tinged with native ideas, and even with native superstitions. Not only the metaphors and epithets of the romances, and much of the old manners and feelings, were reproduced (for Satan and Holofernes possess most of the attributes of Saxon chieftains), but expressions, and even whole lines, were continually transferred to them, so that we are enabled to correct lines in Beowulf by means of the parallel passages which are found in the poetry of the Vercelli and Exeter Manuscripts, or in that which has been twice published under the name of Cædmon.

2. The type of the Anglo-Saxon religious poetry was Cædmon, who, according to the legend, received miraculously in a dream the gift of song. We are far from believing, as some have wished to explain the matter, that this miracle really occurred, and that it may be accounted for naturally, on the presumption of the simple and easy construction of Anglo-Saxon verse. On the contrary, that Cædmon's poems were exceedingly beautiful we have Bede's own testimony, a man well skilled in and much attached to the poetry of his forefathers; and that they were by no means easy to compose, we may be convinced by a comparison of the older religious poetry with that which was certainly written at a later period, (when the minstrel, though he still existed, was no more the same personage he had been,) such as the metrical translations from Boethius attributed to King Alfred. The terms in which Bede speaks of the miracle, show how extraordinary it appeared to those who lived at

the time, that one who had not been taught the profession of poetry, should be able to compose like a regular bard. All, indeed, that we are justified in concluding from this story is, that Cædmon was considered to be so far superior to his contemporaries in the same art, that it required (as has often been the case under similar circumstances) the formation of a particular legend to account for it. It is highly probable that we still have some of his compositions among the mass of religious poetry which has been preserved; and we are fairly authorised in believing, from their style and particular subjects, that at least some parts of that published first by Junius, and more recently by Thorpe, under Cædmon's name, belonged, in their earlier form, to that poet. They possess all the characteristics above enumerated.

3. We find no manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon religious poetry, unless it be some very insignificant fragments, of an earlier date than the tenth century, nor does there occur any mention of such manuscripts before the time of King Alfred—the latter half of the ninth century. Yet, from what Bede says of Cædmon and his imitators,* and from some other circumstances, it seems probable that the vernacular religious poetry was composed chiefly during the years which intervened between the age of the poet (about A. D. 680) and that of the historian (A. D. 731). The circumstances which are most in favour of this supposition are, first, its great dissimilarity in style to anything that can be ascertained to have been written at a later period, and, secondly, the frequent allusion which is made to it at the earlier period. Aldhelm, who died in 709, is said to have been himself one of the best English poets

* Et quidem et alii post illum in gente Anglorum religiosa poemata facere tentabant; sed nullus eum æquiparare potuit. Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 24.

of his day.* Bede was also partial to the vernacular Anglo-Saxon poetry, and well acquainted with it (doctissimus in nostris carminibus); and, even on his death-bed, he not unfrequently uttered his thoughts in passages taken from the national poets. One of these passages is preserved by a writer who was with him in his last moments, and is thus printed in Asser's Annals :—†

for tham ned-fere	before the necessary journey
neni wirtheth	no one becomes
thances snotera	more prudent of thought
thonne him thearf sy,	than is needful to him,
to ge-hicgenne	to search out
er his heonon-gange	before his going hence
hwet his gaste	what to his spirit
godes othe yveles	of good or of evil
efter deathe heonon	after his death hence
demed weorthe.	will be judged.

Boniface, who died in 755, in one of his letters quotes likewise a moral sentiment from an Anglo-Saxon poet—

oft dædlata	oft doth the dilatory man
domæ for-eldit	justly lose by his delay
sigisitha gahwem ;	in every successful undertaking ;
swyltit þi ana ‡	therefore he dieth lonely.

4. During the long period which had thus elapsed before this poetry was committed to writing, as we now find it, it was preserved almost entirely by the memory. When this faculty is exercised and disciplined as it was by the minstrels, and also by the scholars of that day,

* See William of Malmsbury, in Vit. Aldhelm. He is said, among other things, to have translated the Psalms into Anglo-Saxon verse, which may possibly have been the same which Mr. Thorpe has so ably edited from the Paris MS. or the groundwork of it.

† Cuthberti Epistola de Morte Bedæ, ap. Asser. Annal. (in Gale's Collection) p. 152. This letter is also found in Simeon of Durham, and elsewhere.

‡ Bonifac. Epist. ap. Pertz. Thes. vol. iii. quoted in Gent. Mag. June 1836, p. 611, where the language of this fragment (which like the one last quoted, has been much disfigured by inaccurate Latin scribes) is arranged more correctly and translated by Mr. Kemble.

its power of containing and preserving is perfectly wonderful. Among many other books which Wilfred had committed to memory in his youth, whilst resident in the monastery of Lindisfarne, was the whole book of Psalms; and afterwards, when he found that he had learnt them according to the Latin text of Jerome, which was then going out of use among the Catholics, he committed them to memory *a second time*, according to the newly authorised text (more Romanorum juxta quintam editionem).* This is mentioned by his biographer, without any expression of surprise at his powerful memory, but simply to show his respect for the Romish ordinances. There is no class of poetry sooner forgotten than that which is intended merely to celebrate events of temporary interest; and yet it is clear from William of Malmsbury, that, even in his time, (the twelfth century) when the literature of the Anglo-Saxons was rapidly falling into neglect, many political songs and poems of all ages, and even some songs composed by Aldhelm four centuries before, were still preserved in the memory of the people.†

5. The natural result of this mode of transmission was, that the original works of Cædmon and his contemporaries, as well as the Romances, were considerably disfigured in their passage from one reciter to another, and the more so, because the persons by whom they were chiefly preserved were often themselves professed minstrels, and therefore more likely to adulterate them. When these

* Eddius, Vita Wilfred. in Gale, pp. 52, 53.

† Such was the case with the songs made on the marriage of Gunhilda, daughter of Cnut, with the Emperor Henry, full half a century before the Norman conquest,—celebris illa pompa nuptialis fuit, et nostro adhuc seculo etiam in triviis cantitata. Wil. Malms. p. 77, ed. 1601. The poems of Homer were originally preserved in much the same manner, and they seem to have suffered in their transmission in the same way, though (from circumstances) to a much smaller degree than the Anglo-Saxon poetry.

minstrels sung them, it was of course in the dialect which they themselves spoke, and hence it happens that we find them all *written* in the pure West Saxon of the age to which the manuscripts belong; for at that time the West Saxon had become the language of learning, the Attic dialect of our island. To the philologist this must ever be a subject of regret, for it has deprived us of the means of examining closely the dialects and changes of the Anglo-Saxon language. Sometimes the minstrel forgot a few lines, or a long passage, and the poem became imperfect; sometimes he lost a line, or a word, and was obliged to make one to supply its place, or to borrow one which his memory might supply from some other poem; and at other times he might change particular passages, more especially the introductions to poems, to suit the occasion, or to please his own fancy. Hence the argument raised against the authenticity of the poetry attributed to Cædmon, because its introductory lines do not agree with certain other lines that have been accidentally preserved as Cædmon's Introduction, loses much of its weight. Again, as everything tends to show that the Minstrels paid little attention to the claims of any particular author to what they sung, even the name of Cædmon would soon be forgotten, except as one of the worthies of Bede's history; and the King of the West Saxons himself might read or listen to his poetry, without being aware that it was the composition of that famous poet of whom he had been reading in the historian.

6. The manuscripts which remain, to whatever page we turn, bear witness to the truth of these remarks. If we collate two or three manuscripts of the same prose Saxon work, we find few variations, and those of a trifling description, such as the omission of an unimportant word,

or the change of certain letters which were always used as interchangeable. But the manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon poetry abound in every kind of defect, and these faults are mostly of such a nature as to show that their contents must have been taken down from recitation. We have seldom the opportunity of comparing two manuscripts of the same poem; but in the Exeter Manuscript there are some fragments of what is printed as Cædmon, and by a comparison of these, we find that words beginning with the same letter are continually interchanged in the alliteration, that whole lines which had escaped the memory of the reciter had been supplied by others which still made alliteration and sense, that a word, a line, and sometimes a paragraph, had been lost here and there, and these are combined with a host of smaller variations. Sometimes a passage has suffered so much, that it no longer affords either alliteration or sense (or, as we should say of modern verse, either rhyme or reason), and the latter folios of the manuscript of Cædmon are evidently nothing but the stringing together of such passages of the original as the scribe could at the moment recall to memory. The number and character of these variations also support the argument above stated for the antiquity of the poetry itself.

7. Indeed the principal manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon religious poetry which are left, can only be regarded as so many miscellaneous collections of poems and fragments, written down probably at different times, and from the recitation of different persons. Of the poem of Judith, one of the finest specimens of Anglo-Saxon song, we have only a fragment preserved in a Cottonian manuscript.*

* Vitellius, A. xv. the same MS. which has preserved the romance of Beowulf.

The collection which goes by the name of Cædmon, and which is preserved in a manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, is rather a series of pieces on scriptural subjects, perhaps not all by the same hand, than a continued poem. That known as the Exeter Manuscript, is extremely miscellaneous: we find in it fragments of Cædmon and other religious poems, pious songs in praise of the Virgin, legends of the day of judgment, of the punishments inflicted on the wicked in the other world, of the Phœnix and the terrestrial paradise, of St. Guthlac and St. Juliana, along with fragments of all kinds from romances and religious poems, moral sayings, riddles, &c. A manuscript preserved at Vercelli, in Piedmont, for the publication of which we are indebted to the literary zeal of Mr. Purton Cooper, contains also much fine Anglo-Saxon religious poetry, as the legend of St. Andrew, and that of the Invention of the Cross, with one or two fragments.*

8. The style of the Anglo-Saxon religious poetry bears a close resemblance to that of the romances. It is distinguished by the same abundance of epithet and metaphor, and by the same richness of colouring. It is even more pompous, and seems to have been marked by a much more frequent use of the longer measure of verse. It excels also in precisely the same class of pictures which strike us most in Beowulf—and particularly in those which belong to war and festivity. Cædmon, for instance, affords us

* The poem of Judith is printed in Thorpe's Analecta. Cædmon, and the poetry of the Vercelli MS. are both edited by Mr. Thorpe, to whose learning and zeal we owe, in addition to the translation of Raske's Grammar and the edition of the Paris Psalter, the two most useful and elementary books which any language possesses,—the *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica*, and an edition of the Anglo-Saxon translation of Apollonius of Tyre. The Exeter Book is, we are glad to hear, in the press, to be edited by Mr. Thorpe, and published, like Cædmon, at the expense of the Society of Antiquaries.

the following peculiarly impressive description of the march of an army—

Þa him eorla mód	Then the mind of his men
ortrywe wearð,	became despondent,
siððan hie ge-sawon	after they saw
of suð-wegum	from the south ways
fy'rd Faraónis	the host of Pharaoh
forð on-gangan,	coming forth,
ofer holt wegan,	moving over the holt,
eored lixan.	the band glittering.
Gáras trymedon,	They prepared their arms,
guð hwearfode,	the war advanced,
blicon bord-hreoðan,	bucklers gleamed,
by'man sungon,	trumpets sung,
þufas þunian,	standards rattled,
þeod-mearc tredan.	they trod the nation's frontier.
On hwæl hwreopon	Around them screamed
here-fugolas,	the fowls of war,
hilde græ'dige,	greedy of battle,
deawig-feðere,	dewy-feathered,
ofer driht-neum,	over the bodies of the host,
wonn wæl-ceasega ;	the dark chooser of the slain (the raven) ;
wulfas sungon	the wolves sung
atol æfen-leoð	their horrid even-song
æ'tes on wénan,	in hopes of food,
carleasan deor	the reckless beasts
cwyld róf[um] beodan.	threatening death to the valiant.

(*Thorpe's Cædmon, p.* 187.)

A similar description is found in the fragment of Judith—

Þa wearð snelra werod	Then was the army of the bold ones
snude ge-gearewod,	quickly made ready,
cénra to campe ;	of the men eager for the conflict ;
stópon cyne-rófe	marched on nobly
secgas and gesiðas,	the warriors and their companions,
bæron þufas,	they carried the standards,
fóron to ge-feohte	went to the fight
forð on ge-rihte,	straight forwards,
hæleð under helmum,	the heroes under their helms,
of þære haligran byrig,	from the holy city,
on þæt dæg-red sylf ;	at the very dawn ;
dynedan scildas,	the shields resounded,
hlude hlummon.	loudly they roared.

Þæs se hlanca ge-feah	Therefore the lank wolf
wulf in walde,	rejoiced in the forest,
and se wanna hrefn,	and the swarthy raven,
wæl-gifre fugel,	the bird greedy of slaughter,
westan begen,	both from the west,
þæt him ða þeod-guman	that there of mankind
þohton tilian	they thought to get
fylle on fægum;	their fill amidst the slain;
ac him fleah on laste	and in their track flew
earn ætes georn,	the eagle greedy of food,
úrig feðera,	hoary of feathers,
salowig pada	the sallow-coated one
sang hilde leoð,	he sang the war-song,
hyrned nebba.	horny-beaked.
Stópon heaðo-rincas,	The warriors marched,
beornas to beadowe,	the chieftains to the war,
bordum be-ðeahte,	protected with bucklers,
hwealfum lindum,	with arched linden-shields,
þa ðe hwíle ær	who a while before
elðeodigra	had suffered the reproaches
edwit þoledon,	of the foreigners,
hæðenrá hosp.	the insult of the heathens.

(*Thorpe's Analecta*, *p.* 137.)

The same poem presents us with a remarkable description of a drunken feast, which is also a good specimen of the mixture of long and short metres—

þær wæron bollan steape	There were deep bowls
boren æfter bencum gelome,	carried along the benches often
swylce eac bunan and orcas	so likewise cups and pitchers
fulle flet-sittendum:	full to the people who were sitting on
hie þæt fæge þegon,	the renowned shielded-warriors [couches:
rófe rond-wiggende,	were fated, while they partook thereof,
þeah ðæs se ríca ne wende,	although that powerful man did not think
egesful eorla dryhten.	the dreadful lord of earls. [it,
Ða wearð Holofernus,	Then was Holofernes,
gold-wine gumena,	the munificent patron of men,
on gyste-salum;	in the guest-hall;
hloh and hlydde,	he laughed and rioted,
hlynede and dynede,	made tumult and noise,
þæt mihten fira bearn	that the children of men
feorran ge-hy'ran,	might hear afar,
hu se stið-móda	how the stern one
styrmde and gylede,	stormed and shouted,
módig and medu-gal,	moody and drunk with mead,

manode ge-neahhe	exhorted abundantly
benc-sittende,	the sitters on the bench,
þæt hi ge-bærdon wel.	so that they conducted themselves well.
Swa se inwidda	Thus this wicked man
ofer ealne dæg,	during the whole day
dryht-guman sine	his followers
drencte mid wine,	drenched with wine,
swiδ-mod sinces brytta,	the haughty dispenser of treasure,
oδ þæt hie on swiman lagon,	until they lay down intoxicated,
ofer-drencte his duguδe ealle,	he over-drenched all his followers,
swylce hie wæron deaδe ge-slegene,	like as though they were struck with death,
agotene góda gehwylces :	exhausted of every good :
swa het se gumena aldor	thus commanded the prince of men
fylgan flet-sittendum,	to fill to those who were sitting on couches,
oδ þæt fira bearnum	until to the children of mortals
nealæhte niht seo þystre.	the dark night approached.

(*Thorpe's Analecta, p.* 131.)

9. The Anglo-Saxon poems of a more miscellaneous character, which are preserved, are neither very numerous, nor, with one or two exceptions, of any great importance. Political excitement soon took the place of pious zeal, and the religious poetry, thrown from its former high position, was chiefly occupied in hymns and prayers. The clergy introduced regular alliteration sometimes even into their sermons, apparently in order to make them more impressive, and more easy to carry in mind by a people whose memory was less accustomed to retain prose than verse. In the Exeter Manuscript we have much poetry that is certainly of no very remote antiquity, compared with the manuscript itself, and among these we may mention the different poems in praise of the Virgin Mary, which show that the worship of "our Lady" was gaining ground rapidly among the Anglo-Saxons at the time when they were written. The poetry of this class of writings is not of a very high order, for the task of composing them had passed out of the hands of the poets into those of the monks.

10. We may naturally suppose, indeed, that, amid the continued wars of the ninth and tenth centuries, the peaceful dictates of Christianity were among the last subjects that would be listened to by the excited warriors. The minstrel who would obtain praise or reward, sang matters of more temporary interest; and there was produced a great number of political songs, upon which, long treasured up in the memory of the people, later chroniclers built much of the history of these eventful times. William of Malmsbury, and some other writers of his age, make frequent allusions to these songs, and one or two are preserved in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. There has also come down to us one large fragment of a fine poem on the battle of Maldon and the death of the "ealderman" Byrhtnoth, in 993, which furnishes us with an interesting picture of Anglo-Saxon feelings. The speeches which are put into the mouths of Byrhtnoth's noble followers, the "lofty thanes" (wlance þegenas), when they devote themselves to death in the field on which their superior lord had already fallen, are strongly characteristic. Alfwine, the son of Alfric, a young warrior, first addressed his companions,—

On ellen-spræc ge-muna	Remember the bold speech
þa mæle þe we oft	which we oft times
æt meodo sprǽcon,	spoke at our mead,
þonne we on bence	when we on the bench
beot ahófon,	made our boasts,
hæleð on healle,	we warriors in the hall,
ymbe heard ge-winn;	about hard war;
nu mæg cunnian	now may be tried
hwa céne sy;	who is valiant;
ic wylle míne æþelo	I my nobility
eallum ge-cyþan,	will make known to all,
þæt ic wæs on Myrcon	that I was among the Mercians
miccles cynnes,	of noble race,
wæs mín ealda-fæder	my grandfather was
Ealhelm haten,	called Ealhelm,
wís ealdorman,	a wise chieftain,

woruld-ge-sælig.	rich in worldly possessions.
Ne sceolon me on þære þeode	Me the thanes shall not
þegenas ætwítan,	reproach among the people,
þæt ic of þisse fyrde	that I from this expedition
féran wille,	will depart,
eard gesécan,	will seek my home,
nu mín ealdor ligeð	now that my lord lieth low
for-heawen æt hilde :	hewn to death in the battle :
me is þæt hearma mæst,—	that is to me the greatest of griefs,—
he wæs ægðer mín mæg	he was both my kinsman
and mín hláford.	and my lord.

(*Thorpe, Analec. p.* 127.)

The exhortation of Alfwine is answered by several of his companions, and, among the rest, by Leofsunu of Sturmere (in Essex)—

Leofsunu ge-mælde,	Leofsunu spake,
and his linde ahof,	and lifted his linden buckler,
bord to ge-beorge,	the shield for his protection,
he þam beorne on-cwæð :	he said to the warrior :
Ic þæt ge-háte,	" This I promise,
þæt ic heonon nelle	that I will not hence
fleón fótes trym,	fly a foot's space,
ac wille furðor gán,	but that I will advance onward,
wrecan on ge-winne	to avenge in the battle
mínne wine-drihten.	my beloved chieftain.
Ne þurfon me embe Stur-mere	They about Sturmere shall not need,
stéde-fæste hæleð	the steadfast warriors,
wordum ætwítan,	to reproach me with words,
nu mín wíne ge-crane,	now my comrade is fallen,
þæt ic hláford-leas	that I lord-less
hám siðie,	journey home,
wende fram wige,	that I depart from the war,
ac me sceal wæpen níman,	but me shall the weapon take,
ord and íren.	edge and iron."
He ful yrre wód	He full mad with anger
feaht fæstlice,	fought firmly,
fleam he for-hogode.	flight he despised.

(*Ib. p.* 128.)

As may be seen in the passages here cited, the crowded epithets and metaphors of the romances and earlier religious poems are not found in these later productions.

§ III. *The Anglo-Latin Writers.*

1. While the introduction of the Christian religion was thus modifying the old national literature of the Anglo-Saxons, a foreign literature was brought in with it, which was soon to exercise an important influence. Many of the missionaries whom the Anglo-Saxon Church justly regarded as its fathers, were distinguished as scholars, and by their example a general love of learning was soon spread amongst their converts. Schools had been already founded before the middle of the seventh century. It is, however, to two foreign scholars, Theodore and Adrian, who were sent into England early in the latter half of the same century, that we owe the establishment of learning among the Anglo-Saxons. Theodore, a native of Tarsus, was made Archbishop of Canterbury, and even at Rome was famous for his extensive acquaintance with profane as well as sacred literature, and that equally in the Latin and Greek languages.* His friend the Abbot Adrian was by birth an African, but, like his companion, he was, to use the words of Bede, "exceedingly skilled both in Greek and Latin;" † and he is termed by William of Malmsbury "a fountain of letters and a river of arts." ‡ These two foreigners first began to teach openly, in conjunction with the Christian faith, the arts and sciences, and the languages of Greece and Rome, and their school was so well attended, that, when Bede wrote his history, there were still alive some of their scholars,

* Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 1. and his Hist. Abbat. Wiremuth. p. 223, in the Cologne edition of his works. The genuine penitential of Theodore, preserved in the Library of Corp. Chr. Col. Cambridge, will appear for the first time in Mr. Thorpe's new edition of the A.-S. Laws.

† Bede, Hist. Eccl. *ib.*

‡ Qui esset fons litterarum, rivus artium. W. Malms. de Pontif. p. 340.

who, as he assures us, were as well versed in Greek and Latin as in their own native tongue.* Amongst those who had profited most by Adrian's teaching was Aldhelm of Sherburn.

2. The Anglo-Saxons approached the intellectual field which was thus laid open to them with extraordinary avidity. They were like the adventurous traveller who has just landed on a newly discovered shore: the very obstacles which at first stood in their way, seemed to have been placed there only to stimulate their zeal. They thus soon gained a march in advance even of their teachers, and the same age in which learning had been introduced amongst them, saw it reflected back with double lustre on those who had sent it. At the beginning of the eighth century, England possessed a number of scholars who would have been the just pride of the most enlightened age; and not only teachers, but books also, were sent over to the Franks and Germans. The science which they planted there, continued to flourish long after it had faded at home.

3. The cultivation of letters was in that age by no means confined to the robuster sex—the Anglo-Saxon ladies applied themselves to study with equal zeal, and almost equal success. It was for their reading chiefly that Aldhelm wrote his book *De Laude Virginitatis*. The female correspondents of Boniface wrote in Latin with as much ease as the ladies of the present day write in French, and their letters often show much elegant and courtly feeling. They sometimes also sent him specimens of their skill in writing Latin verse. The abbess Eadburga was one of Boniface's most constant friends; she seems to have frequently sent

* Indicio est quod usque hodie supersunt de eorum discipulis, qui Latinam Græcamque linguam æque ac propriam, in qua nati sunt, norunt. Bede, Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. c. 2.

him books, written by herself or by her scholars, for the instruction of his German converts; and on one occasion he accompanies his letter to her with a present of a silver pen.* Leobgitha, one of her pupils, concludes a letter to Boniface by offering him a specimen of her acquirements in Latin metres.—"These underwritten verses," she says, "I have endeavoured to compose according to the rules derived from the poets, not in a spirit of presumption, but with the desire of exciting the powers of my slender talents, and in the hope of thine assistance therein. This art I have learnt from Eadburga, who is ever occupied in studying the divine law."† The four hexameters which follow this introduction, though not remarkable for elegance or correctness, are still a favourable specimen of the attainments of a young Anglo-Saxon dame. They are addressed as a concluding benediction to Boniface himself:—

"Arbiter omnipotens, solus qui cuncta creavit,
In regno patris semper qui lumine fulget;
Qua jugiter flagrans sic regnet gloria Christi,
Illæsum servet semper te jure perenni."

4. The zeal for the study of foreign literature, joined with religious prejudices, was followed by another result. As early as the latter end of the seventh century, all ranks of people were seized with a desire of visiting Rome, the source from which had issued this pure stream

* Unum graphium argenteum. Bonifac. Epist. p. 73, in his works. It is, perhaps, rather a license thus taken in calling *graphium*, a pen: it seems to have been more properly a kind of instrument for scraping and rubbing, which the scribe held in his hand while writing.

† Istos autem subterscriptos versiculos componere nitebar secundum poeticæ traditionis disciplinam, non audacia confidens, sed gracilis ingenioli rudimenta excitare cupiens, et tuo auxilio indigens. Istam artem ab Eadburgæ magisterio didici, quæ indesinenter legem divinam rimari non cessat. *Ib.* p. 83.

of doctrine and knowledge. Bishops and priests sought to receive confirmation of their estate and doctrine from the hand and mouth of the Pope; multitudes of the middle classes left their homes and goods to spend their lives in the vicinity of the see of the apostle Peter; even princes laid down their crowns in order to end their days in the holy city. At first the heads of the church encouraged this kind of pious exile. The numerous visits to Rome brought with them many advantages; they increased the general taste for knowledge, and gave rise to a spirit of intellectual adventure and research; and the travellers often spent their time in that city of science and learning in transcribing old manuscripts, or their money in purchasing them; so that, in addition to many of the luxuries and elegancies of life, they came home laden with books. But it was soon found that this rage for travelling to Italy was attended with great evils and inconveniences; and it is strongly condemned by Boniface, who laments, in some of his letters, that the pilgrims were continually falling off before the temptations and dangers which befel them among strange people in unknown lands. The women, in particular, who left their homes with the intention of becoming nuns at Rome, were sometimes drawn into a less respectable way of living in the towns that lay in their way, and their conduct was more likely to throw disgrace than lustre upon the Christianity of the Anglo-Saxons.*

5. In England, during the eighth century, the multiplication of books was very great. The monks were emulous of attaining skill in writing and illuminating. At a later period, this was enumerated as one of the accomplish-

* Quia magna ex parte pereunt, paucis remanentibus integris. Perpaucæ enim sunt civitates in Longobardia, vel in Francia, aut in Gallia, in qua non sit adultera vel meretrix generis Anglorum, quod scandalum est, etc. Bonifac. Epist. p. 105.

ments even of so great a man as Dunstan.* Diligence and industry, in the absence of the more speedy process of printing, enabled the Anglo-Saxons not only to form several public libraries in England, as well as private collections, but also to send out of the country books in considerable numbers. Boniface, while moving about from place to place on the Continent, addresses frequent demands of this kind to his brethren at home; who, on the other hand, are constantly applying for copies of new books, or such as were not yet known in England, which he might chance to meet with, in order to increase their own stores. At one time he asks for some works of Bede,—at another time he prays one of his friends to send him some of those of Aldhelm, "to console him amidst his labours with these memorials of that holy bishop;" and on one occasion he asks the abbess Eadburga to cause a copy of the Gospels to be written magnificently in letters of gold, and sent to him in Germany, that his converts there might be impressed with a proper reverence for the sacred writings.† A similar volume had, at an earlier period, been given by Wilfrid to the church of York, where it was an object of great admiration; it contained the four Gospels written in letters of gold on purple vellum, and its cover, made of solid gold, was studded with gems and precious stones.‡ Many specimens of the magnificent writings of this age are still preserved. A noble copy of the Gospels, written

* Artem scribendi, necne citharizandi, pariterque pingendi peritiam diligenter excoluit. Life of Dunstan, in MS. Cotton. Cleopat. B. XIII. fol. 69, r°. (by Bridferth.)

† Bonifac. Epist. p. 81.

‡ Addens quoque Sanctus Pontifex noster inter alia.....inauditum ante seculis nostris quoddam miraculum. Nam quatuor Evangeliæ de auro purissimo in membranis depurpuratis, coloratis, pro animæ suæ remedio scribere jussit; necnon et bibliothecam librorum eorum omnem de auro purissimo et gemmis pretiosissimis fabrefactam, compaginare inclusores gemmarum præcepit, etc. Eddii Vita Wilfridi, p. 60, in Gale's Scriptores.

at Lindisfarne in the latter years of the seventh century, after having escaped many perils both by fire and flood, is now deposited among the Cottonian Manuscripts in the British Museum, where it is known by the title of the Durham Book ;* but the rich cover which once inclosed it has long disappeared. It was, indeed, but a short-sighted devotion to apply these valuable materials to such a purpose; for amidst the troubles which came on a little later —internal dissensions, and the ravages of a foreign enemy who respected not the faith in which they had originated —the books were too often sacrificed to the rapacity which their exterior dress had excited.

6. In the time of Theodore and Adrian, the principal seats of learning were in Kent, and the south of England, where it continued long after to flourish at Malmsbury, and in some other places. But the kingdom of Northumbria seems to have afforded a still more congenial situation; and the school established at York, by Wilfred and Archbishop Egbert, was soon famous throughout Christendom. Egbert taught there Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and the vast collection of books, which had been amassed by him and his predecessors, afforded great facility to literary pursuits. Alcuin, who was one of his scholars, frequently dwells with pleasure, in his letters, on the memory of his ancient master and early studies, and contrasts the literary stores amongst which he had been bred with the barrenness of France. In 796, when he was engaged in his school at Tours, he writes to Charlemagne—"I here feel severely the want of those invaluable books of scholastic erudition which I had in my own country, by the kind and most affectionate industry of my master, and

* It was written by Bishop Eadfred, then only a monk. Eadfred died in 721. A very interesting popular account of this manuscript is given in Brayley's Graphic Illustrator, p. 355.

also in some measure by my own humble labours. Let me therefore propose to your excellency, that I send over thither some of our youth, who may collect for us all that is necessary, and bring back with them into France the *flowers of Britain.*"* In his metrical history of the church of York,† Alcuin gives a more particular account of this library; he tells us that it contained, amongst many other books which he thought of less consequence, the works of Jerome, Hilarius, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, Gregory, Pope Leo, Basil, Fulgentius, Cassiodorus, John Chrysostom, and Victorinus, with those of the native writers, Bede and Aldhelm. Among the historical writers and philosophers there were Orosius, Boethius, Pompeius (probably Justin), Pliny, Aristotle, and Cicero. The poets who were then chiefly read were all found there, such as Sedulius, Juvencus, Alcimus, Clemens (*i. e.* Prudentius), Prosper, Paulinus, Arator, Fortunatus, Lactantius; and, of the antients, he mentions Virgil, Statius, and Lucan, as being at that time the most esteemed. The grammarians were also numerous, such as Probus, Phocas, Donatus, Priscian, Servius, Eutychius, Pompeius (probably Festus), and Commianus. In fact, books of Theology and Grammar were those most studied and sought after at this period, and are the subjects most frequently mentioned by the correspondents of Boniface in their inquiries after new works. In a volume preserved in the British Museum, written not much later than the beginning of the ninth century, the original possessor, whose name was Athelstan, a great reader, as it appears, of grammatical and scientific books, has inserted on one of the pages a catalogue of his own library; it consisted of Isidore's treatise *de Natura Rerum*, at that period one

* Alcuini, Epistolæ, p. 53, in his works.

† Alcuin. de Pontif, etc. Eborac. p. 730, in Gale's Scriptores.

of the text-books of general science, and a book of calculations, or arithmetic, which he had obtained from a priest named Alfwold; his grammatical treatises were two works on metres, the less and greater Donatus, a gloss on Cato, and another on Donatus, and an anonymous treatise on Grammar, with a book of *Dialogues*, the subject of which is uncertain. The only book falling under the class of theology is a copy of the Apocalypse; and there are two poets, Persius and Sedulius.* But when we bear in mind that it was the custom in cataloguing books to give the title of the first work in the volume only, and that the volume in which this list is found, and which is described in it by the title of Isidore *de Natura Rerum*, contains, in addition to that treatise, Bede's Poem *De Die Judicii*, a work of Priscian, a glossary of uncommon Latin words, and some other things; we may conclude that Athelstan's library was by no means to be despised. With these libraries may be compared that of Bishop Leofric, which he gave to the church of Exeter in the earlier part of the eleventh century, after the Anglo-Saxon language had become more popular with the writers of books. In this collection, consisting of near sixty volumes, there were twenty-eight containing English works, mostly theology, hymns, homilies, and translations of scripture, but including King Alfred's translation of Boethius, and the great collection of Anglo-Saxon poetry which is still preserved and known by the name of the Exeter Book,† in a fly-leaf of which

* þis syndon ða bec þe Æþestanes wæran. de Natura Rerum. Persius. De Arte Metrica. Donatum minorem. Excerptiones de Metrica Arte. Apocalipsin. Donatum majorem. Alchuinum. Glossam super Catonem. Libellum de Grammatica Arte quæ incipit, *Terra quæ pars*. Sedulium. and i. ge-rím wæs Alfwoldes preostes. *Glossa super Donatum. Dialogorum.*—MS. Cotton. Domit. A. I. fol. 55, v°. The last two articles seem, by the writing, to have been added to the library after the list was first written.

† The original MS. somewhat dilapidated, remains at Exeter. A care-

the catalogue is inserted. The Latin works in this collection were, in theology, the Pastorale and Dialogues of Gregory, the books of the Prophets, with various other separate portions of the Bible, a Martyrology, the Lives of the Apostles, various theological works of Bede and Isidore, and some anonymous treatises of the same kind; in philosophy, there were Boethius de Consolatione, the Isagoge of Porphyry, Isidore's Etymologies; in history, Orosius, a very popular book among the Anglo-Saxons; the poets mentioned are the ordinary Christian writers then most in repute, Prosper, several volumes of Prudentius, Sedulius, and Arator, with Persius and Statius. The contents of these three libraries, those of a great scholastic establishment, of a private individual, and of a bishop, will give a very fair view of the class of *foreign* writers most generally read by our Saxon forefathers, and consequently those on which their literary taste was moulded. The numerous manuscripts of the Saxon period which are still preserved contain chiefly the same works, except that there we find many names of less celebrity which do not appear in these lists, and also a greater number of classical authors, such as Virgil, Horace, Terence, Juvenal, and some of the more common prose writers of antiquity.

7. There can, indeed, be no doubt, not only from the manuscripts of them which are still found written in a Saxon hand, but from the manner in which the Anglo-Saxon scholars quote them in their works, that they were in the habit of reading many of the best Latin authors. Bede quotes by name, in his tracts on grammar and metres, along with Arator, Fortunatus, Sedulius, Prosper, Paulinus, Juvencus, Prudentius, and Ambrose, the writings of Virgil very frequently, as well as those of Ovid,

fully executed fac-simile copy has been deposited in the British Museum, where it is ranged among the Additional MSS. under the number 9067.

Lucan, whom he terms "poeta veteranus," Lucretius, and Homer, and he speaks even of these two latter poets as if he were well acquainted with their works.* In his tract *de Orthographia,* with Virgil and Ovid, he quotes

* The way in which Bede speaks of these two writers scarcely leaves room for doubt that the Anglo-Saxon scholars read them in the original languages. In the printed edition of his treatise de Arte Metrica (Opera, tom. i. p. 42), he speaks of the character of "Lucretii Carmina," and in the same tract, on another occasion (p. 38), he quotes a line, when speaking of the quantity which Lucretius gives to the word *aqua*—

Quæ calidum faciunt *aquæ* tactum atque vaporem.

This line is found in Lucret. de Rer. Nat. VI. 869, and does not seem to be quoted by any of the grammarians. Moreover, curiously enough, the word *aquæ* itself is a mere gloss for *laticis*, and is found only in this quotation of Bede, and therefore seems to have been an error of the manuscript which that scholar used. It may be remarked, that many of Bede's observations, in the tract here quoted, are extremely judicious.

With regard to Homer, Bede quotes him for the quantity which he *generally* gives to a short final syllable that falls at the beginning of a foot, and in a manner that seems to imply that he read the poet in Greek (de Arte Met. ib. p. 27). We might bring many passages together which seem almost to prove that Homer continued to be read in the schools till the end of the thirteenth century, when the older system of school learning was thrown out by Aristotle, and the new philosophy-course. In the curious fabliau (of the thirteenth century), published by M. Jubinal in his valuable edition of the works of Rutebeuf, entitled "The Battle of the Seven Arts," where the old and new system are drawn up in combat against each other, we have the following enumeration of the principal books read in the ancient grammar-course, which are identical with those read by the Anglo-Saxons as above stated, with this exception, that the classical writers are here rather more numerous in proportion to the others. Aristotle meets Grammar in the thick of the battle—

Aristote, qui fu à pié,	Aristotle, who was on foot,
Si fist chéoir Gramaire enverse.	Knocked Grammar down flat.
Lors i a point mesire Perse,	Then there rode up master Persius,
Dant Juvénal et dant Orasce,	Dan Juvenal and Dan Horace,
Virgile, Lucain, et Etasce,	Virgil, Lucan, and Statius,
Et Sédule, Propre, Prudence,	And Sedulius, Prosper, Prudentius,
Arator, Omer, et Térence :	Arator, *Homer*, and Terence :
Tuit chaplèrent sor Aristote,	They all fell upon Aristotle,
Qui fu fers com chastel sor mote.	Who was as bold as a castle on a hill.

(Jubinal's Rutebeuf, ii. 426.)

Horace, Terence, Laberius, Varro, Cornelius Severus, Macer, Pacuvius, and Lucilius, but he may have taken some of these only at second hand. Aldhelm, in his prose introduction to the Ænigmata, quotes Virgil, Juvenal, whom he calls *lyricus*, Persius, and Lucan, with Prosper and Arator. Alcuin also, in his grammatical and rhetorical tracts, brings frequent examples from Virgil, Horace, Terence, Juvenal, and Lucan.

8. The authors here enumerated, studied in a right spirit, were quite sufficient to have given the Anglo-Saxon scholars a correct and pure taste in Latin poetry. But unfortunately they imbibed prejudices even at the fountain head. At Rome, the classical writers had long ceased to be popular; for the zeal which often led the Christians, in their estimation of the sentiment, into an injudicious depreciation of the language when adorned only by its own beauties, had already condemned them to that neglect under which many of them were perishing. Those which are preserved we owe, in a great measure, to the grammarians who flourished in the latter days of the empire, such as Priscian and Donatus, who, by their continual quotations, gave some of them a certain value in the eyes of men who made those grammarians an important part of their studies. It is almost solely in grammatical treatises, that we find these authors quoted during the age which produced the principal Latin writers among the Anglo-Saxons, although most of the Anglo-Latin poets were continually endeavouring to imitate them. Aldhelm, it is true, quotes Virgil more than once in his prose treatise *de Laude Virginitatis*, and Alcuin quotes him sometimes in his letters, though he speaks of him in a very disparaging tone. We are told by an anonymous, but ancient, writer of his life, that Alcuin, "having in his youth read the books of the ancient philosophers and the *lies* of Virgil," as he ad-

vanced in years, came to a more sober judgment, and would neither hear them himself, nor permit his scholars to read them;—"The sacred poets," said he, "are enough for you; ye have no need to pollute yourselves with the luxurious eloquence of Virgil's language."* —and he severely scolded one of his scholars, named Sigulf, because he had been discovered reading that poet in private. The story cannot be true in detail, because Alcuin quotes Virgil by name in his later letters; but it shows us clearly, that, in the latter part of the eighth century, and in the ninth, when this life was probably written, the reading of the classic poets was not generally countenanced, although they were still believed to possess beauties which might fascinate the mind, and there *were* persons who still persisted in seeking them out. This, indeed, continued to be the case throughout the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period, because they were always read in conjunction with the grammarians in the schools. At a later date than the age of which we have been speaking, the historian of the Monastery of Ely declaims against "the fables of the Gentiles," which, "painted and dressed in rhetorical figures," were then read in the schools, and declares that he was moved with the emulation of writing the acts and sayings of the saints for the honour and glory of Christ, in order to supply their place.†

* Legerat isdem vir Domini libros juvenis antiquorum Philosophorum, Virgiliique mendacia, quæ nolebat jam ipse nec audire, neque discipulos suos legere, "sufficiunt," inquiens, "divini poetæ vobis, nec egetis luxuriosâ sermonis Virgilii vos pollui facundiâ."—*Vita Alcuini*, in the first vol. of his works, p. lxvi.

† Cumque gentilium figmenta, sive deliramenta, cum omni studio videamus composita, coloribus rhetoricis ornata et quasi quodammodo depicta, categoricis syllogismis et argumentationibus circumfulta et corroborata, in gymnasiis et scholis publice celebrata et cum laude recitata, dignum duximus ut sanctorum dicta et facta describantur, et descripta ad laudem et honorem

9. The Anglo-Saxon scholars naturally took chiefly for their models in poetry the works of the Christian poets which recur so often in their manuscripts, and it might well be expected that the imitators of writers who were already far removed from classic eloquence and purity of style, would themselves sink still lower in the scale. Several circumstances joined their influence in vitiating the style of the Anglo-Saxon writers. The narrow partiality of Theodore, Adrian, and their scholars, for the study of Greek,* had given a wrong turn to their literary taste; and this appears in the multitude of Greek words and expressions which they grafted upon the Latin language, so as to render their writings sometimes quite unintelligible. The imitations of the classical writers which appear in their poetry, are, as is too often the case in later times, little better than the stringing together of so many old phrases, or the use of a certain word, not because it is itself appropriate, but because some one of the old poets had used it in a similar position. They at the same time fell into an error committed more or less by imitators in every age; they chose, in preference to all others, those expressions, or words, or uses of words, which ought not to be imitated, being exceptions to

Christi referantur, etc. *Historia Eliensis*, in Gale's Scriptores, p. 463. This history was written at an early date. Does the writer allude to the Saxon schools in the neighbouring town of Cambridge?

* The partiality for the study of Greek is exhibited in the following curious enumeration of characteristics of different nations, preserved in an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the ninth century (Calig. A. xv; fol. 122, v°.)—Sapientia Græcorum, invidia Judæorum, superbia Romanorum, largitas Longobardorum, sobrietas Gothorum, elevatio Francorum, gula Gallorum, ira Brittonum, stultitia Saxonum, libido Scottorum, crudelitas Pictorum.—It is very desirable that such lists as this, written at different periods and among different people, should be collected together—they would give us a curious view of the history of national character. A similar list, written in the thirteenth century, will be found in *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, No. 1, p. 5. (Pickering, 1839.)

rules, and which we consider allowable in the pure Latin writers, simply because we believe that when they wrote, they would not have taken liberties which were not allowable; and these expressions, because they were strange and uncommon, they repeated over and over again with lavish profusion. The character of their native poetry led them also to affect a style, both in verse and prose, which in their Latin is often intolerably pompous and inflated. To all these sins we must add another: the early Anglo-Latin poets delighted in nothing more than ingenious conceits, enigmatical expressions, puns, and alliteration. Thus Alcuin, to quote one example among a thousand, although he certainly knew perfectly well the meaning of the name of his countrymen, yet in his metrical history of the See of York, when describing their condition before the introduction of Christianity, he cannot let slip the opportunity of telling us that they then deserved their name of *Saxons*, because they were *as hard as stones*—

Duritiam propter dicti cognomine *Saxi*.

Aldhelm, in addition to his love of Greek words, fills his poems with alliterative lines like the following—

*P*allida *p*urpureo *p*ingis qui flore vireta.

and again—

Et *p*otiora cupit, quam *p*ulset *p*ectine chordas
Queis *p*salmista *p*ius *p*sallebat cantibus olim.

Alcuin, in the following initial lines of a short poem, gives us an extraordinary specimen of cutting up and dividing words, which was also not uncommonly practised by the continental Latin poets, from his time to the beginning of the tenth century—

En tuus Albinus, sævis ereptus ab undis,
Venerat altithrono nunc miserante Deo.

Te cupiens *appel-* peregrinus *-lare* camœnis,
O Cori[d]on! Cori[d]on! dulcis amice satis.*

10. Alcuin and Aldhelm were the chief Anglo-Latin poets of this period. Aldhelm possessed all the defects above enumerated. He was a great imitator of the ancients; he was a celebrated Greek scholar, and he filled his writings with foreign words and clumsy compounds; he was also a lover and composer of Anglo-Saxon verse, and he shows a deeply rooted taste for alliteration and pompous diction; and in addition to these defects we see in his writings generally a bad choice of words, with harsh sentences, and a great deficiency in true delicacy and harmony.† In a word, Aldhelm's writings, popular as they once were, exhibit a very general want of good taste. For an example of this, we need only cite one of the embellishments of his metrical treatise *de Laude Virginum*, where he tells the story of St. Scholastica, how, when she had failed by her arguments and persuasions in prevailing on her brother to embrace Christianity, she fell on her knees in prayer by his side; how a fearful storm immediately burst over the house, and how the

* Alcuinus "*Ad Discipulum*," Poems, p. 235, in his works. Abbo, in the beginning of the tenth century, inserts *que* in the middle of a compounded word, for the sake of metre, as *ocquecidens* and *inquesulam*, for *occidensque* and *insulamque*.

† William of Malmsbury, himself a good scholar for his age, has left us a curious estimate of Aldhelm's character, in which he confesses the over-pompous style of the Anglo-Latin writers. "Denique Græci involutè, Romani splendidè, Angli pompaticè dictare solent. Id in omnibus antiquis chartis est animadvertere, quantum quibusdam verbis abtrusis et ex Græco petitis delectentur. Moderatius tamen se agit Aldelmus, nec nisi perraro et necessario verba ponit exotica. Allegat Catholicos sensus sermo facundus, et violentissimas assertiones exornat color rhetoricus. Quem si perfecte legeris, et ex acumine Græcum putabis, et ex nitore Romanum jurabis, et ex pompa Anglum intelliges." Vit. Aldelm. p. 339. If this writer alludes to the monastic charters given under the Saxon Kings, they are certainly written in the strangest "jargon" that it is possible to conceive, and Aldhelm is purity itself in comparison with them. Perhaps *chartis* only means books.

unbelieving brother was convinced by the miracle. A better poet would have dwelt upon the terrors of the storm—on its effect upon the house which held Scholastica and her brother—and on the qualms which the roaring of the thunder and the flashing of the forked lightnings struck into *his* breast. But Aldhelm loses sight of his immediate subject in his eagerness to describe a *real* storm; it is true he tells us there was wind, and thunder, and lightning, and that they affected both heaven and earth, but he finds out that there was rain also, and that the earth was moistened, and he goes out of his way to calculate its effects in swelling the rivers and flooding the distant vallies, all which circumstances have nothing to do with the virgin saint or her unbelieving kinsman. Aldhelm certainly describes a storm, but it is not a storm made for the occasion. The lines, taken by themselves, are comparatively a favourable specimen of the poet's talents—

> Mox igitur cœlum nimboso turbine totum
> Et convexa poli nigrescunt æthere furvo;
> Murmura vasta sonant flammis commista coruscis,
> Et tremuit tellus magno fremebunda fragore;
> Humida rorifluis humectant vellera guttis,
> Irrigat et terram tenebrosis imbribus aer,
> Complentur valles, et larga fluenta redundant.

11. Alcuin has, on the whole, more simplicity and less pretension in his poetry than his predecessor Aldhelm, and so far he is more pleasing; but, unfortunately, where the latter was turgid and bombastic, the former too often runs into the opposite extreme of being flat and spiritless. His style is seen to best advantage in his calm details of natural scenery. The description of the city of York, at this early period one of the most frequented commercial towns in England, is a fair specimen of the beauties of this poet: it possesses a certain degree of elegance and cor-

rectness, for which we may look in vain among the writings of Aldhelm.

> Hanc piscosa suis undis interluit Usa,
> Florigeros ripis prætendens undique campos:
> Collibus et silvis tellus hinc inde decora,
> Nobilibusque locis habitatio pulchra, salubris,
> Fertilitate sui multos habitura colonos.
> Quo variis populis et regnis undique lecti,
> Spe lucri veniunt, quærentes divite terra
> Divitias, sedem sibimet, lucrumque, laremque.
>
> *De Pontif. etc. Eborac. v.* 30.

Alcuin wrote much poetry, on various subjects, lives, histories, elegies, and epigrams. Perhaps the most favourable specimen of his muse is the elegy on the destruction of the monastery of Lindisfarne by the Danes, some parts of which are very simple and pleasing. His history of the See of York also contains some good passages.

12. The Latin poets among the Anglo-Saxons were not very numerous. During the eighth century, their best period, and the earlier part of the ninth, we find, besides the two above mentioned, Bede (the universal scholar) and Boniface, and a few others, such as Tahtwin, Cuthbert of Hereford, Acca of Hexham, and Athelwolf of Lindisfarne. In the tenth century, Fridegode wrote, in verse, the Life of Wilfred, and the Monk Wolstan that of Swithin. Henceforward the history of Anglo-Latin poetry presents almost a blank, until the formation of a school of Latin poets in the twelfth century, some of whom approached the purity of the Augustan age.

13. The Latin *prose* writers of the classic ages were very little read by the Anglo-Saxons, because they had not the same powerful allies in the grammarians to keep them in countenance. This circumstance explains what has frequently been observed by the continental writers, that the Christians from the fourth or fifth century down to the tenth and eleventh, wrote much purer Latin

in their poetry, with all their faults, than in their prose compositions. The great luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon church employed their pens chiefly on theology, and science as far as it was then studied; and their writings, not attractive by their language, offer little interest to the general reader. The theological writings of Bede, Boniface, and Alcuin, which consist chiefly of commentaries on the Scriptures, and of controversial tracts on questions then agitated, exhibit immense power of mind, disciplined by the most profound study, and characterized by much independence of thought. Aldhelm sacrifices too much to rhetorical ornament, and is the least readable of them all. We have, however, two classes of Anglo-Latin prose literature during the Saxon period, which make amends for the apparent deficiency in some of the others.

14. Boniface and Alcuin have left us a large body of familiar letters, which, from the many early transcripts of them that remain, seem to have been the delight of our forefathers during the ninth century, and which deserve to be better known than they are, even at the present day. In these letters, although the same subject of paramount importance which gave rise to the severer writings casts a shade of character over the whole, yet at times the theologian and scholar throws off the dulness of scholastic erudition, shows himself the attentive correspondent, and the affectionate friend, and amid graver business indulges in playful compliments and sallies of wit. Occasionally the present sent by a friend from a distant land will produce a joke or an epigram; at one time the follies of contemporaries will draw a smile, or even a tear; while, at another, the intelligence of the loss of a friend or the devastation by barbarous enemies of some beloved spot, is received with the pathetic elegance of heart-felt sorrow. The correspondence of Alcuin is peculiarly lively, and his letters

are interesting to us in more points of view than one. In them, the fearful struggles in Italy and the south of France, between the iron-armed warriors of the west and the Saracens who had conquered Africa and Spain, and the expeditions of Charlemagne to curb the Saxons and other tribes who paid but an uncertain obedience to his sway, events on which we are accustomed to look through the misty atmosphere of romance, till they seem little better than fables, are told as the news of yesterday; and the warrior whom we are in the habit of picturing to our minds, sheathed in iron and stern in look, employed only in bruising the heads of his enemies, or oppressing his friends, not less than the hoary-headed priest whom we imagine in flowing robes, with calm and reverend mien, preaching salvation to herds of wild men but just emerging from the ignorance of pagan superstition, stands himself before us suddenly transformed into the man of taste and the elegant scholar. It is thus that, when we abstract ourselves entirely from the outward consideration of dress and position, from the ever-varying attributes of age and country, these letters teach us the instructive lesson that the mind, when cultivated, is much the same in all ages, that it is capable of the same feelings, the same tastes, and the same intelligence, and that these show themselves naturally under the same forms,—in a word, that the old saying of the poet—

Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt,

is true when we apply it to the mind in general, and when we take into consideration diversity of time and person, as well as difference of place.

15. The Anglo-Saxons have left us but few regular histories. The Church History of Bede, the less important works of Asser and Athelweard, and two or three monastic chronicles, added to the well-known Anglo-Saxon Chroni-

cle, are nearly all we have. But the deficiency in this respect is amply compensated by an abundance of biography, a class of writing for which our Saxon forefathers seem to have had an especial partiality. Scarcely a scholar or a churchman of any consequence quitted the mortal stage, but instantly some one of his immediate friends, or of his attendants through life, consigned his history to writing, and told his reminiscences, and not unfrequently repeated much that he had heard from the mouth of him whose biography he had undertaken. These lives are peculiarly interesting; like Bede's history, they frequently exhibit the credulity of their authors; but the luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon church did not live immured in cloisters; they were stirring men in the world, the counsellors of princes, not only attending them in the cabinet, but sometimes at their side even in the field; and their memoirs are full of contemporary anecdotes of political history as well as of private manners. By these means, in the case of some of the Anglo-Saxon scholars, we have as good materials for their lives, as for that of many a literary character of the last century.

16. It is hardly necessary to say that these lives are more remarkable for their matter than for their language. In the earlier ages the disciples of the great scholars seem to have written much worse Latin than their masters; thus nothing can be more harsh than the style of Eddius, in his life of Wilfred, written at the begining of the eighth century. With the ninth century the Latin school began to decline rapidly, and we have few writers of talent at a later period. King Alfred complained that in the time of his youth, soon after the middle of this century, there were no "masters" to teach him, that is, there were no successors to Bede, and Archbishop Egbert, and Alcuin. That the ninth century was illiterate must be altogether a mistaken no-

tion, for in it was written the largest portion of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts which are now left, of the older and contemporary Latin writers. But the vernacular literature, which had formerly been known only as one that was sung and preserved in the memory, and perhaps seldom written, seems to have been now gaining ground, and to have been making hasty advances towards establishing as strong a claim to the title of "book-learning," as the Latin literature to which that term had been previously given. Such, in fact, was the position which it had gained in the tenth century, when therefore we may suppose that literature had become much more generally diffused. The earlier part of the ninth century may be aptly called the *Age of Glosses*. It is apparently in manuscripts of that period that we find the greatest number of interlinear translations of the words of the Latin writers into Anglo-Saxon, a sure sign of the decay of Latin scholarship. The book which is most frequently glossed in this manner, is Aldhelm's prose treatise *de Laude Virginitatis*, which, being full of Græcisms, and having been written principally for the edification of the ladies, whom we cannot suppose to have been as well skilled in Greek as in Latin, we find accompanied by glosses, sometimes in Latin and sometimes in Anglo-Saxon. The other books which are found most frequently glossed are the Gospels and the Psalms, with the poems of Prudentius, Prosper, and Sedulius.* The *Age of Glosses* naturally led, in the latter part of the

* Of five MSS. of Aldhelm, in the King's Library in the British Museum, two are attributed, with apparent reason, to the eighth century, and neither of these are glossed in Anglo-Saxon, though one of them is most copiously glossed in Latin. Two are written in a hand not more modern than the middle of the ninth century, and are glossed here and there in Anglo-Saxon. The fifth is of the latter part of the ninth century, or, perhaps, of the beginning of the tenth, and is very full of glosses in Anglo-Saxon. The poets are generally glossed in the earlier part of the ninth century; the Gospel sometimes at a much earlier period; and the Psalms are found

ninth century, to the *Age of translations*, which opened under the reign of the immortal Alfred.

§ IV. *The Anglo-Saxon Prose Writings.*

1. Our chief authority for the private character of King Alfred is the historian Asser, his contemporary and friend, a monk of Bangor, in Wales. Asser's testimony is, as might be expected, extremely valuable and interesting; but he indulges too much in trifles, often expressing great astonishment at things which were by no means extraordinary, and making discoveries of what was not new; and he frequently judges of the monarch of the West Saxons as though he were speaking of one of his fellow monks. In those days, the first quality of a King was not necessarily the being able to read and write. Alfred appears, from his infancy, to have received a princely education. He was carefully instructed in, and habituated to, hunting and other royal exercises, and from an early age he was made to *commit to memory* the national poetry, to which he was never tired of listening. It was his love for this class of literature, and the temptation of a handsomely written manuscript offered to him by his mother, that encouraged the royal child to overcome the difficulty of learning to read.* This he did not attempt until his twelfth year; and Asser, probably with little justice, attributes this supposed tardiness to his parents' negligence.†

glossed as late as the begining of the eleventh, and even in the twelfth century, as in the instance of a superb manuscript in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, R. 17, 1.

* Sed Saxonica poemata die noctuque solers auditor relatu aliorum sæpissime audiens docibilis memoriter retinebat, in omni venatoria arte industrius venator, incessabiliter laborat non in vanum. . . . Cum ergo quodam die mater sua sibi et fratribus quendam Saxonicum poematicæ artis librum quem in manu habebat ostenderet, etc. *Asser, Vita Ælfr. ed. M. Parker, p. 7.*

† Sed, proh dolor! indigna suorum parentum et nutritorum incuria usque ad xii. ætatis annum aut eo amplius illiteratus remansit. *Id. ib.*

2. In Alfred's time the study of the Latin language had fallen so much into neglect, that even the priests could scarcely translate the church service, which they were in the constant habit of reading. The king himself regretted that he had not learnt Latin until a late period of life; but his sorrow was greater for the general ignorance of his countrymen than for his own backwardness. He then, as he tells us in his preface to the Pastorale, looked back with regret to the flourishing state of learning in England at an earlier period, "and how they came hither from abroad to seek wisdom and doctrine in this land, whereas we must now get it from without, if we will have it at all."* He tells us that when he ascended the throne there were few persons south of the Humber who could translate from Latin into English, and he did not believe that they were much better provided on the other side of that river. "I also called to mind," says the royal writer, "how I saw, before it was all spoiled and burnt, that the churches throughout the whole English nation stood filled with treasures and with books, and also with a great multitude of God's servants, yet they reaped very little of the fruit of those books, because they could understand nothing of them, since they were not written in their own native tongue."† He then proceeds to express his wonder that the great scholars who had formerly lived in this island had not translated the Latin books into English; but he attributes this to the little expectation which they could ever have

* And hu man ut on borde wisdomē and lare hider on land sohte, and hu we hi nu sceoldon ute begitan, gif we hi habban sceoldon. *Alfred, Pref. to Gregory's Pastorale, ed. M. Parker.*

† Þa ge-munde ic eac hu ic ge-seah ær þam þe hit eal for-heregod wære and for-bærned, hu þa circan geond eal Angel-cyn stodon maðma and boca ge-fylled, and eac micel mæniu Godes þeawa, and þa swiðe lytle feorme þara boca wiston, forþam þe hi hira nan þing on-gitan ne mihton, forþam þe hi næron on hira agenge þeode a-writene. *Ib.*

harboured, that good scholarship would decline so much, that they should no longer be understood in the originals.

3. Alfred was ambitious of remedying both these evils, of supplying his country at the same time with scholars and with translations. With a view to the first of these objects he invited learned men from abroad, and among the rest Grimbald, whom he made abbot of Winchester, and John of Corvei, whom he in like manner placed over the new monastery of Athelney. Among the scholars patronised by Alfred, we must also reckon the erudite but free-spoken John Scotus, famous for his knowledge of Greek, and for his severity and sourness of manners, by which, according to the story which was afterwards prevalent, he at last so provoked his scholars, that they fell upon him with their writing instruments and stabbed him to death. Alfred himself led the way in translating the Latin books into Anglo-Saxon. Among the works which we owe to his pen, the most important are translations of the Pastorale of Gregory, destined more particularly for the use of his clergy,—of the treatise of Boethius *de Consolatione Philosophiæ*, one of the most popular Latin books in the middle ages, and which was often translated into almost every language of Europe,—and of the Ancient History of Orosius, and the English Church History of Bede. Other translations were made by his order, as that of the Dialogues of Gregory by Werfred bishop of Worcester;* and no doubt many others were eager to follow so illustrious an example.

4. We must not, however, let ourselves be led by the greatness of his exertions to estimate Alfred's own learning at too high a rate. In "Grammar" his skill was never very profound, because he had not been instructed

* W. Malmsb. p. 45. (Ed. 1601). Ingulph. p. 870. ib.

in it in his youth; and the work of Boethius had to undergo a singular process before the royal translator commenced his operations. Sighelm, bishop of Shirburn, one of Alfred's chosen friends, was employed to turn the original text of Boethius "into plainer words,"—"a necessary labour in those days," says William of Malmsbury, "although at present (in the 12th century) it seems somewhat ridiculous."* And in a similar manner, before he undertook the translation of the Pastorale, he had it explained to him—the task was perhaps executed sometimes by one, sometimes by another—by Archbishop Plegmund, by Bishop Asser, and by his "mass-priests" Grimbald and John.† But Alfred's mind was great and comprehensive; and we need not examine his scholarship in detail in order to justify or to enhance his reputation. His translations are well written; and whatever may have been the extent of his knowledge of the Latin language, they exhibit a general acquaintance with the subject superior to that of the age in which he lived. Whenever their author added to his original, in order to explain allusions which he thought would not be understood, he exhibits a just idea of ancient history and fable, differing widely from the distorted popular notions which were prevalent then and at a subsequent period in the vernacular literature.‡ There is one apparent exception to this observa-

* Libros Boethii .... planioribus verbis elucidavit ..... illis diebus labore necessario, nostris ridiculo. Sed enim jussu regis factum est, ut levius ab eodem in Anglicum transferretur sermonem.—*W. Malms.* p. 248.

† Swa swa ic hi ge-leornode æt Plegmunde minum ærcebiscope, and æt Assere minum biscope, and æt Grimbolde minum mæsse-preoste, and æt Johanne minum mæsse-preoste.—*Preface to the Pastorale.*

‡ It is observable throughout the middle ages, that what is stated correctly and judiciously in the Latin writers appears most grossly incorrect and capriciously distorted whenever we meet with it in the vernacular

tion. In translating the second metre of the fifth book of Boethius, beginning—

> Puro clarum lumine Phœbum
> Melliflui canit oris Homerus,—

Alfred has added an explanation which shows that Virgil was then much better known than Homer. "Homer," says he, "the good poet, who was best among the Greeks: he was Virgil's teacher: this Virgil was best among the Latins."* Alfred probably means no more than that Virgil imitated Homer: but in the metrical version of the metres of Boethius, also *attributed* to Alfred, the matter is placed quite in another light, and Homer not only becomes Virgil's teacher, but his friend also.

Omerus wæs	Homer was
east mid Crecum	in the east among the Greeks
on þæm leod-scipe	in that nation
leoþa cræftgast,	the most skilful of poets,
Firgilies	Virgil's
freond and lareow,	friend and teacher,
þæm mæran sceope	to that great bard
magistra betst.	the best of masters.

(*Metres of Boeth. ed. Fox*, p. 137.)

We will, however, willingly relieve the Anglo-Saxon monarch from all responsibility for this error, which seems to have arisen from the misconstruction of Alfred's words by some other person who was the author of the prosaic

writings of the same period, a proof of the slow passage of knowledge from one class of society to another. In the metrical French romance of Troy (12th century) which is founded on the pseudo-Dares, we are told that Homer wrote mere fables which he knew were not true; and, accordingly, when he recited his work to his citizens, most of them set their faces against it, and there arose two factions at Athens: but in the end the poet had most influence, and succeeding in obtaining the general sanction of his version of the story, to the disadvantage of that of Dares.

* Ðeah Omerus se goda sceop, þe mid Crecum selest wæs; se wæs Firgilies lareow, se Firgilius wæs mid Lædenwarum selest.—*Alfred's Boethius, ed. Cardale*, p. 327.

verses that have hitherto gone under his name. Several reasons combine in making us believe that these were not written by Alfred: they are little more than a transposition of the words of his own prose, with here and there a few additions and alterations in order to make alliteration: the compiler has shown his want of skill on many occasions; he has, on the one hand, turned into metre both Alfred's preface (or at least imitated it), and his introductory chapter, which certainly had no claim to that honour; whilst, on the other hand, he has overlooked entirely one of the metres, which appears to have escaped his eye as it lay buried among King Alfred's prose.* The only manuscript containing this metrical version which has yet been met with, appears, from the fragments of it preserved from the fire which endangered the whole Cottonian Library, to have been written in the tenth century.

5. The policy of Alfred in calling into England foreign scholars, was pursued, if not successively, at least from time to time, during the whole of the century which followed, and even till the time of the Norman conquest. Athelstan, in the early part of the tenth century, was a patron of learning as well as a great king, and not unworthy to sit on Alfred's throne. In return, his fame was spread abroad, and handed down to his posterity by the scholars whom he had encouraged; and we learn from William of Malmsbury and others, that his actions were the subject of more than one Latin poem. Of Dunstan, it has been said that he was second only to Alfred himself in his endeavours to raise learning and science in England.† Oswald, made Archbishop of York in 971, who

* The full discussion of this question is reserved for another occasion.

† Ipse artium liberalium in tota insula post regem Alfredum excitator mirificus.—*W. Malms.* p. 56.

had himself been educated at Fleury in France, followed closely in the steps of Dunstan, and it is noted of him in the old chronicles "that he invited over into this country literary men."* The same may be said of Wulstan, another of Dunstan's friends; he brought Abbo of Fleury, who introduced into England "much fruit of science," and whose efforts were more particularly directed to the regeneration of the schools; for at that time (the latter part of the tenth century) we are told that learning (*i. e.* the study of Latin literature) had again fallen into universal decay.† In the eleventh century, under Edward the Confessor, when Harold, the son of Earl Godwin, founded a school at Waltham, we find him also seeking a foreign scholar to direct it.‡ But the frequent mention in the early historians of such incidents, is a proof that not even the power and wisdom of Alfred could restore a state of things which had, in the natural order of events, passed away, and which had been founded on feelings that no longer existed. Foreign learning was now no novelty to the Anglo-Saxons, and the excitement which alone had pushed into being the profound scholars of the age of Bede and Alcuin, ran in other channels. Alfred's own example aided in spreading the already prevalent taste for Anglo-Saxon writings, which must also have been increased by the tendency of his schools, in which the English language and the national poetry held an equal place with the study of the learned languages.

6. From the numerous manuscripts which still remain,

* Advocavit in patriam literatos homines.—*Polychron.* p. 267.

† Ad scholas regendas .... quoniam omnis fere literaturæ studium et scholarum usus per Angliam in dessuetudinem venerat et soporem.—*Historia Rameiensis, in Gale,* p. 400. Unus fuit Abbo Floriacensis monachus, qui *multam scientiæ frugem* Angliæ invexit.—*Malms. de Pontif.* p. 270.

‡ *Vita Haroldi,* in the Chroniques Anglo-Normandes, p. 161. Conf. *Eund.* p. 157.

and from the known causes of destruction, we have every reason to believe that there did once exist a very large body of Anglo-Saxon vernacular writings. But the name of one man only, after the days of Alfred, who wrote much in his native tongue, has come down to us with any degree of certainty; and that was the grammarian Alfric. In historians of the twelfth century, we find some indications of Anglo-Saxon writings of a much earlier date, chiefly translations from Scripture, but they rest on somewhat doubtful authority, as before that time it had become fashionable to put great names to spurious books. Aldhelm translated the Book of Psalms; and Bede is said to have made an Anglo-Saxon version of the Gospel of St. John.* To the latter scholar, indeed, the following curious semi-Saxon verses, recovered with some other fragments from imminent destruction by the antiquarian zeal of Sir Thomas Phillipps,† seem to ascribe other Anglo-Saxon writings.

Sanctus Beda was i-boren	Saint Bede was born
her on Breotone mid us,	here in Britain with us,
and he wisliche	and he wisely
.... a-wende,	.... translated,
ðæt þeo Englisc leoden	that the English people
þurh weren i-lerde,	were thereby instructed,
and he þeo ci.... ten un-wreih,	and he the .... solved,
þe [we] questiuns hoteþ,	that we call questions,
þa derne digelnesse	the secret obscurity

* W. Malmsb. p. 23, (ed. 1601).

† "Fragment of Ælfric's Grammar, Ælfric's Glossary, and a poem on the Soul and Body, in the orthography of the 12th century: discovered among the Archives of Worcester Cathedral, by Sir T. Phillipps, Bart. Edited by Sir T. P. London, 1838," folio. These fragments of a valuable MS. of the twelfth century, were found in the cover of a book, for the strengthening of which they had been used. Many words and parts of words have been lost by the mutilation of the edges of the leaves, which renders the fragment here given more obscure than it would otherwise be. It has been attempted to supply the deficiencies in some part by the additions between parentheses.

Þe de[ore-]wurthe is.	which is very precious.
Ælfric abbod,	Alfric the abbot,
Þe we Alquin hoteþ,	whom we call Alquin,
he was bocare,	he was a scholar,
and Þe.... bec wende,	and translated the .... books,
Genesis, Exodos,	Genesis, Exodus,
Utronomius,	Deuteronomy,
Numerus, Leveticus.	Numbers, Leviticus.
Þi[urh] Þeos weren i-lærde	Through these were taught
ure leoden on Englisc;	our people in English;
Þet weren Þeos biscop[es]	they were these bishops,
[Þe] bodeden Cristendom:	who preached Christendom:
Wilfred of Ripum,	Wilfrid of Ripon,
Johan of Beoferlai,	John of Beverley,
Cuþb[ert] of Dunholme,	Cuthbert of Durham,
Oswald of Wireceastre,	Oswald of Worcester,
Egwin of Heoveshame,	Egwin of Evesham,
Æld[helm] of Malmesburi,	Aldhelm of Malmsbury,
Swiþþun, Æþelwold,	Swithin, Athelwold,
[and] Aidan,	and Aidan,
Biern of Wincæstre,	Birin of Winchester,
[Cwiche]lm of Rofecæstre,	Quichelm of Rochester,
Sanctus Dunston,	Saint Dunstan,
and S. Ælfeih of Cantoreburi:	and St. Elfege of Canterbury:
Þeos læ[reden] ..	these taught
ure leodan on Englisc:	our people in English:
Næs deorc heore liht,	their light was not dark,
ac hit fæire glod.	but it burnt beautifully.
N[u is] Þeo leore for-leten,	Now the doctrine is forsaken,
and Þet folc is for-loren,	and the people ruined,
nu beoþ oþre leoden	now it is another people
Þeo læ[ren] ure folc,	who teach our folk,
and feole of Þen lor-Þeines	and many of the teachers [them.
losiæþ, and ðæt folc forþ mid.	perish, and the people along with

From the repetition of the assertion that they taught in English, we might be led to suppose that the author of these verses, while lamenting over the fate of the literature of his country, then trampled under foot by the Normans, believed that all the bishops here mentioned had written in Anglo-Saxon. Yet many of them lived in the first age after the establishment of Christianity in England, and we

have no other reason whatever for placing them in our list of Anglo-Saxon authors.

7. After the name of Alfred, that of Alfric stands first among the Anglo-Saxon vernacular writers, both for the number and the importance of his works. The Heptateuch, which is evidently alluded to in the foregoing verses, is still preserved; and in the introduction which precedes the Book of Genesis, the writer offers some very judicious observations on the general character of Anglo-Saxon translations from Latin writers. We there also learn that, in the latter part of the tenth century, the Latin language was as generally neglected, even by the clergy, as it had been in the days of King Alfred.* To extend the knowledge of this language was one of the objects of Alfric's exertions, and he wrote a grammar, a glossary, and several other books of a similar kind. But his fame rests chiefly on another class of writings—his Homilies—to which, primarily, we owe the attention that has in modern times been shown to the literature of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers.

8. When the Anglo-Saxons embraced the Christian religion, they naturally received along with it some errors which had already gained ground at Rome. The reverence with which a people newly emerged from paganism, and actuated by a zeal like that which was shown by the early Anglo-Saxon converts, must have looked upon their first instructors, is a sufficient excuse even for the deep theologians of those first ages, if they did not sift very carefully the doctrines which had been delivered to them. But, at the same time, the Anglo-Saxons were far removed from

* Thorpe's Analecta, p. 25. Alfric adds,—"Þa ungelæ'redan preostas, gif hi hwæt lites únderstándaþ of þam Lyden bócum, þonne þinceþ him sona þæt hi magon mæ're láreowas beón."—*The unlearned priests, if they understand a little of the Latin books, then they soon conceive the idea that they may be great scholars.*

that slavish dependence on Rome which the Catholic system at a later period enjoined. They acted and judged with freedom and independence, and they disputed or condemned unhesitatingly the errors which the Romish church afterwards continued to introduce. In the numerous Anglo-Saxon homilies written, and in part translated, by Alfric, almost every vital doctrine which distinguishes the Romish from the Protestant church, meets with a direct contradiction. After the Anglo-Norman conquest had established in England the Papal power, many copies of these homilies were preserved, because, the language being not very generally understood by the new comers, they were suffered to lie mouldering and neglected on the shelves of the monastic libraries, though we still find some manuscripts in which the most obnoxious passages have been mutilated. But in the heat of religious controversy at the period of the Reformation in England, one of Alfric's writings was brought forward, which condemned entirely the doctrine of transubstantiation as a growing error, and this unexpected and powerful ally was embraced exultingly by the Protestant champions. "What now is become of your boasted argument of apostolical tradition?" they said to their opponents—"see here that the novelties with which you charge us are older than the doctrines which you oppose to them." The result was, that men like Matthew Parker began to make diligent researches in old libraries for Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of every description.

9. Every branch of literature and science felt more or less the effects of the prevailing taste for Anglo-Saxon, instead of Latin, writings. At the time when Alfred was making his subjects acquainted, by means of his own translations, with the ancient history of Rome and the early ecclesiastical history of their country, the first foun-

dation was also laid of the famous Anglo-Saxon chronicle. Down to the year 981, this chronicle is supposed to have been compiled and written by Plegmund archbishop of Canterbury, one of Alfred's learned men. From that period the narrative of contemporary events was continued from time to time in the Anglo-Saxon tongue by different writers, until the entire breaking up of the language in the middle of the twelfth century. Equal in importance to the chronicle, and similarly written in the Anglo-Saxon language, are the laws, with which again the great name of Alfred is intimately connected. It was he who first arranged and reduced into better order the various imperfect collections of legislative regulations, which had been published and acted upon by the different kings who had lived before him. The king gives the following simple and natural description of the work which he had thus performed. "Thus then," says he, "I, Alfred the king, gathered together and caused to be written down as many of those laws which our forefathers held as pleased me, and as many as did not please me I threw away, with the advice of my witan (the representatives of the nation), and ordered them to be held differently. For I dared not venture to set many of my own in writing, because it was not clear to me how much of them might please those who come after us. But of such as I found either in the time of Ine my kinsman, or of Offa king of Mercia, or of Athelberht who first among the English people received baptism, those which seemed to me most just I collected them here, and the others I omitted. I, Alfred king of the West-Saxons, showed these to all my witan, and they then said that it pleased them all well to hold them."* The Saxon laws were revised, enlarged, and published anew in the

* Schmid, Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, p. 40.

Anglo-Saxon language, by many of Alfred's successors, and particularly by Athelstan, Athelred, and Cnut.*

§ V. *Anglo-Saxon Science—the Schools, and Forms of Education.*

1. From the time when Sigebert, before the year 635, established a school in his kingdom of East-Anglia, in imitation of those which he had seen on the Continent, at least till the latter part of the tenth century, although knowledge had become more generally diffused, the Anglo-Saxons had made no advance in science itself. This was a natural consequence of the system which they pursued. The reverence with which the converts in the earlier ages had learned to regard everything that came from Rome, gradually degenerated into implicit confidence in the books of science which were imported from thence, until it became almost an article of faith to decide all difficult questions by their authority. Education was thus less a discipline of the mind, (which, with all its defects, it certainly was at a later period when western Europe had felt the influence of the Arabian school) than a mere adoption of just so much science, right or wrong, as had been handed down from previous ages. Even when men like Bede wrote elementary treatises, they were but compilers from the foreign writers, enlarging perhaps here and there on themes which had been treated too briefly; and where they thought they saw anything which was inconsistent

* The best edition of the Anglo-Saxon laws yet published is that by Schmid, with a German translation, 8vo. Leipzig, 1832 (vol. I. only). A more perfect edition was, however, entrusted by the Record Commission to the care of Mr. Thorpe, and will shortly be finished. The last edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is that by Dr. Ingram, with an English translation. A few only of the Homilies have yet been published, and a complete edition is much to be desired. They have been used to great advantage in the invaluable Bampton Lectures by Mr. Soames.

with their own observations, it was with a diffidence, sometimes approaching to fear, that they ventured to make the remark. In times nearly approaching to that of the Norman conquest, the popular treatises on science were still nothing more than compilations from Bede, and the greatest philosophers of the day seldom presumed to do more than write commentaries on his works. One of the immediate consequences of this blind submission to authority, was the production of many spurious books, some of them bearing the names of the great philosophers of antiquity, whilst others, not quite so presumptuous, were published under such names as Bede and Alcuin. These spurious writings naturally tended to add to the confused notions of the Anglo-Saxons on matters of science.

2. In the tenth century the Christians began to seek instruction in the schools of the Saracens in Spain, and particularly at Toledo; and the scientific movement which had already commenced on the Continent was felt in some measure in England, in conjunction chiefly with the monastic reforms introduced by Dunstan and Athelwold. But the popular feeling was strongly opposed to it, and the ill fame attached to science when it was brought from the country of the infidels, where it was supposed to be obtained immediately from the arch-fiend, agreed but too closely with the suspicions which attached themselves to the ascetic life of the studious monks, and to the glimpses of strange operations with which from time to time they indulged the world. For several centuries, Toledo was celebrated chiefly as the school of what were characteristically termed the *occult* sciences; and to have studied there was synonymous with being a profound magician. The readers of the old chronicles will readily call to mind the fearful story of Pope Gerbert, more historically known as Silvester the Second. He was

born in France towards the middle of the tenth century, and became a monk either at Fleury or at Rheims at an early period of his life. The love of science soon became his ruling passion, and he repaired to Toledo in order to obtain its full gratification. There he learnt the use of the astrolabe, and gained a profound knowledge not only of astronomy, but of arithmetic, music, geometry, and almost every other branch of science; and he is said to have been the first who brought from thence the knowledge of the *abacus*, that is, he introduced into France the use of those seemingly arbitrary characters which, afterwards modified into our modern numerical figures, have exercised so important an influence on mathematical knowledge.* Gerbert is also reported to have learnt there "what the singing and flying of birds portended," and to have acquired the power of calling up spirits from the other world. At Toledo he lived in the house of a famous Saracen philosopher, who had a fair daughter, and a most powerful and magical book, with which, although it was the object of his pupil's ardent desires, he could not be prevailed upon to part either for money or love. Gerbert, as the story goes, finding that it was useless to apply for the book, now made love to the lady, and thus discovered that the philosopher was in the habit of concealing it under his pillow while he slept. In an hour of conviviality he made his instructor drunk, and carried off the book in triumph. When however the philosopher awoke, he discovered, by his knowledge of the stars, which way

* Abacum certe primus a Saracenis rapiens, regulas dedit quæ a sudantibus abacistis vix intelliguntur. Wm. of Malmsb. from whom the story is taken. The characters of the abacus are found in manuscripts of the twelfth century, bearing a strong resemblance to the modern numerals as they are written in manuscripts of the thirteenth century. The book on the *abacus* is supposed to have been the magical book (grimoire) of the story.

his scholar had fled, and pursued him closely; but the latter baffled his researches by suspending himself under the arch of a bridge in such a manner as neither to be on the earth nor in the water, and while the Saracen returned home disappointed, he pursued his way till he came to the sea shore. Here he opened his book, and summoned the evil one, by whose agency he was conveyed safely over the water, but, according to a report which was current among his contemporaries, they first made an agreement by which, although the philosopher seemed to be a gainer for the time, yet in the end the advantage was to remain with the tempter. Gerbert afterwards taught publicly in the schools in France, and his lectures were so well frequented, and his fame for learning so great, that he was made archbishop first of Rheims and next of Ravenna, and finally was elected to the papal chair. His enemies failed not to represent this constant run of prosperity as the result of his compact with the devil: at Rome, as was reported, he occupied his time in seeking, by means of the "art magicall," the treasures which had been concealed by the pagans in ancient times—perhaps he was an antiquary, and collected Roman monuments; and in after ages a note appeared in some lists of popes setting forth that pope Sylvester died a bad death, though in what manner is not quite clear.

3. Among the many scholars who had profited by Gerbert's teaching, was, as it is said, Athelwold of Winchester, the friend of Dunstan, and his supporter in his monastic reforms. Dunstan himself fell under the same imputation of dealing with unlawful sciences as Gerbert, which perhaps arose as much from the jealousy of his enemies, as from his extraordinary studies.* Among various other reports,

* Some of Dunstan's enemies accused him before the king,—dicentes eum ex libris salutaribus et jurisperitis non saluti animæ profutura, sed avitæ

there went abroad a story about an inchanted harp that he had made, which performed tunes without the agency of man, whilst it hung against the wall;—a thing by no means impossible. The prejudices against Dunstan at length rose so high, that some of his neighbours, seizing upon him one day by surprise, threw him into a pond; probably for the purpose of trying whether he were a wizard or not, according to a receipt in such cases which is hardly yet eradicated from the minds of the peasantry. What was in part the nature of Dunstan's studies while at Malmsbury we may surmise from the story of a learned and ingenious monk of the same monastry named Ailmer, who not many years afterwards made wings to fly, an extraordinary advance in the march of mechanical invention, if we reflect that little more than a century before Asser the historian thought the invention of *lanterns* a thing sufficiently wonderful to confer an honour upon his patron King Alfred. But Ailmer, in the present instance, allowed his zeal to get the better of his judgment. Instead of cautiously making his first experiment from a low wall, he took flight from the top of the church-steeple, and, after fluttering for a short time helplessly in the air, he fell to the ground and broke his legs. Undismayed by this accident, the crippled monk found comfort and encouragement in the reflection, that his invention would certainly have succeeded, had he not forgotten to put a tail behind.†

gentilitatis vanissima didicisse carmina et histriarum colere incantationes. Vita S. Dunstani, in MS. Cotton. Cleop. B. XIII. fol. 63, v°. This is the life written by Bridferth of Ramsey, the commentator on Bede, and was printed from a MS. in the Monastery of St. Vedasti at Arras, by the Bollandists, in the Act. Sanctor. Maii, iv. 346.

† Nam pennas manibus et pedibus haud scio qua innexuerat arte, ut Dædali more volaret, fabulam pro vero amplexus; collectaque e summo turris aura spacio stadii et plus volavit, sed venti et turbinis violentia simul, et temerarii facti conscientia, tremulus cecidit, perpetuo post hæc debilis, et crura effractus. Ipse ferebat causam ruinæ, quod caudam in posteriori parte oblitus fuerit. W. Malms. (in the Scriptores post Bedam), p. 92.

4. The course of studies followed in the Anglo-Saxon schools was of considerable extent. Bede classes the sciences taught by Theodore under the three simple heads of poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic.* Alcuin informs us that Albert, who succeeded Egbert in the archbishopric of York, taught in the school there, first, grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, and poetry, and in addition to these all the higher branches of learning,—

> Ast alios fecit præfatus nosse magister
> Harmoniam cœli, solis lunæque labores,
> Quinque poli zonas, errantia sidera septem,
> Astrorum leges, ortus, simul atque recessus,
> Aerios motus pelagi, terræque tremorem,
> Naturas hominum, pecudum, volucrumque, ferarum,
> Diversas numeri species, variasque figuras;
> Paschalique dedit solemnia certa recursu,
> Maxima scripturæ pandens mysteria sacræ.
>
> (*De Pontif. Eborac. p.* 728.)

Aldhelm at the latter end of his prose treatise *de Laude Virginitatis* enumerates what he calls "the disciplines of the philosophers," under six general heads, namely, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, astrology, and mechanics†, of all which he elsewhere declares that he found arithmetic to be the most difficult and complicated. In another place he speaks of the studies of the grammarians, and the disciplines of the philosophers, as being divided into seven, alluding evidently to the arrangement which was so universal during the middle ages, in which they stood in this order, grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy.‡ But it is very singular that in this instance no two manuscripts of Aldhelm agree.

* Bede, Hist. Eccl. iv. 2.

† Omnes propemodum philosophorum disciplinas, hoc est, arithmeticam, geometricam, musicam, astronomiam, astrologiam, et mechanicam.

‡ These seven arts, known at a later period as the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the schools, are enumerated in the following well-known lines:—

> Gram. loquitur, Dia. vera docet, Rhet. verba colorat,
> Mus. canit, Ar. numerat, Geo. ponderat, As. colit astra.

The printed text, evidently formed from the nomenclature above mentioned, which is found at the end of the book, arranges the seven sciences thus,—arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, astrology, mechanics, medicine.* Of five manuscripts in the old Royal Library in the British Museum, one only, apparently of the eighth century,† agrees with this printed text. In all the others the list begins with the grammatical studies, and two of them, one of the eighth century,‡ the other of the ninth,§ give the list mentioned above, namely, grammar, rhetoric, dialectics (or logic), arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy. Of the remaining two manuscripts, one, written in the ninth century,‖ combines the two lists together, and the other, probably of the end of this same century,¶ adds medicine to them all, and makes ten sciences instead of seven. A similar list, entered separately in a manuscript of the ninth century, agrees with Aldhelm's printed text.** From these variations we are led to conclude, in the first place, that the division into seven branches was not very popular among the Anglo-Saxons,††

* Igitur consummatis grammaticorum studiis et philosophorum disciplinis, quæ septem speciebus dirimuntur, id est, Arithmetica, Geometrica, Musica, Astronomia, Astrologia, Mechanica, Medicina. Aldhelm. de L. V. ed. Delrio, p. 41.

† MS. Reg. 5 F. III., fol. 24 v°.

‡ MS. Reg. 7 D. XXIV, fol. 126 v°.

§ MS. Reg. 5 E. XI. fol. 69 v°.

‖ MS. Reg. 6 A. VI. fol. 64 v°.

¶ MS. Reg. 6 B. VIII. fol. 30 v°. Grammatica, rhetorica, dialectica, arithmetica, musica, geometrica, astronomia, astrologia, mechanica, medicina.

** MS. Cotton. Domitian, A. I. fol. 1 r°. To this list is added the term *mathematici, steor-wigleras.*

†† It is easy to see that the foundation of all these variations lies in the ambiguity of the sentence, "consummatis grammaticorum studiis et philosophorum disciplinis, quæ septem speciebus dirimuntur," where *quæ* and *septem* might be construed as referring to the whole, or only to the *phil. disciplinis*, but the persons with whom the numerous variations originated can have had no knowledge of the septenary division, or they would never have had any doubt on the subject.

and, secondly, that the study of medicine was considered a very important part of a scientific education, in fact, that the clergy were the chief medical practitioners.

5. With the single exception of medicine (læce-dom), we find no term in the Anglo-Saxon language for any of these branches of learning; but in the glosses, which most of these manuscripts contain, the original word is simply translated according to its component parts. We are inclined to look upon this as an additional proof that there were no scientific works written in the vernacular tongue until a late period. Thus rhetoric is translated by þel-cræft, and dialectics or logic by flit-cræft,* the latter of which will be best understood by the readers of old Scottish poetry, if we explain it as the *art of flyting*. Grammar is not translated in these glosses, but the Anglo-Saxon term generally used was stæf-craft, or the art of letters. Arithmetic is rím-cræft, or the art of numbers; geometry is translated by eorþ-gemet, or earth-measurement; music by son-cræft, or the art of sound; astronomy by tungel-æ′, or the law of the constellations; astrology by tungel-gescead, or the reason of the constellations; and mechanics by orþanc-scipe, or ingenuity.

6. The schools of the Anglo-Saxons appear in system and form of teaching to have been the prototypes of our old grammar-schools. Before the time of Alfred, English was not taught in them. The elementary treatises on Grammar, the first subject in their course of studies, were written in Latin, and it is probable that the teacher, or *magister*, in the first instance, explained and translated them orally, whilst the chief task of his scholars was to commit them to memory, and to repeat the teacher's comments. At the same time they were continually exer-

* These two glosses are found only in MS. Reg. 6 B. VII.

cised in reading and chanting in Latin. As the boys made themselves masters of the first elements of grammar, or the accidence, they were taught Latin dialogues, to make them acquainted with the colloquial forms of the language in which, as scholars, they were expected to converse. In the same manner, up to a very late period, the colloquies of Corderius and the Janua Linguarum of Comenius were the first reading books in our modern schools. The scholars were long practised in these elements of learning, before they were introduced to the higher branches. Grammar, in its more extended sense, included generally the study of the ancient authors; and since, as was before observed, it was in the study of those authors, that our forefathers in this remote age learnt science, the name of grammar was often popularly applied to the whole course of study, so much so that, in comparatively recent times, even the supposed power of the magician and conjurer was frequently designated by the same appellation of "grammarye."*

7. It is singular enough, that most of the ways of giving a popular form to elementary instruction, which have been put in practice in our own days, had been already tried in the latter times of the Anglo-Saxons. We thus find the origin of our modern catechisms amongst the forms of education then in use. Not only were many of the elementary treatises on grammar written in the shape of question and answer, with the object of making them easier to

* In the old legend of Charlemagne we are told, premièrement fist Karlemaine paindre dans son palais gramaire, qui mère est de tous les arz. Jubinal, Rutebeuf, vol. ii. p. 417. In the metrical *Image du Monde*, a work of the thirteenth century, we find one of those mystical reasons, then so common, why grammar held this high rank—it is the *science of words*, and by *the word* God created the world!

Par parole fist Dex le monde,
Et tous les biens qui ens habunde.

learn and to understand, as well as of encouraging the practice of Latin conversation, but also the first books in the other sciences. We find this to be the case in many of the tracts written by Bede and Alcuin, as well as in those which were fabricated in their names. Afterwards, when in England the Latin tongue seems to have ceased to be to the same extent as before a conventional language among the learned, various attempts were made to simplify the steps by which it was taught. First, the elementary grammars were accompanied with an Anglo-Saxon gloss, in which, separately from the text, each word of the original was repeated with its meaning in the vernacular tongue;* and then, as a still further advance in rendering it popular, the Latin grammar itself was published only in an Anglo-Saxon translation. We have seen the old Latin school-grammar pass through similar gradations in our own time. We owe to Alfric the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Latin Grammar, which, from its frequent recurrence in the manuscripts, seems to have been the standard elementary book of the day; and in the preface to that work he repeats the complaint, which had been made more than once since the days of Alfred, of the low state of Latin literature in England.† Much about the same period came into use introductory reading books, with interlinear versions, which differed not in the slightest degree from those of the Hamiltonian system of the present day. A singularly interesting specimen of such books, composed also by Alfric, has been preserved in two manuscripts, and is printed in Thorpe's Analecta Anglo-Saxonica; the text, which is a dialogue between persons of different professions,

* A metrical Latin grammar, with a glossarial adjunct of this kind, is preserved in the Harleian MS. No. 3271, written in the tenth century.

† The only printed edition of Alfric's Grammar, is that published at the end of Somner's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.

is so arranged as to give within the smallest possible space the greatest variety of Latin words, and so to convey the largest quantity of instruction. This curious tract is valuable to the historian for the light which it throws upon the domestic manners of the age in which it was written. Among many other things, we learn that even the school-boys in the monasteries were subjected to a severe course of religious service; and that the rod was used very liberally in the Anglo-Saxon schools.

8. Amongst other Anglo-Saxon forms of instruction which have retained their popularity down to modern times, we must not overlook the collections of Arithmetical problems which are given in all our old elementary treatises, and are still to be found in such books as Bonnycastle's Arithmetic. The Anglo-Saxons had a regular series of such questions, many of which are identically the same as those found in modern publications. This ancient collection is printed in the works of Bede, and again in those of Alcuin, but it is probably not the work of either of those writers. It is given anonymously in a manuscript in the British Museum, which is certainly not of a later date than the tenth or eleventh century.* The first problem in the list is this:—"The swallow once invited the snail to dinner: he lived just one league from the spot, and the snail travelled at the rate of only one inch a day: how long would it be before he dined?" The following question, in various shapes, was very popular in our old school-books —"Three men and their three wives came together to the side of a river, where they found but one boat, which was capable of carrying over only two persons at once: all the

* MS. Burney, No. 59. See Bede's Works, tom. i. col. 103, and Alcuin's Works, tom. ii., where this collection is printed. In a MS. of the 10th cent. at Vienna, it is attributed to Alcuin.

men were jealous of each other: how must they contrive so that no one of them should be left alone in company with his companion's wife?" Again, "An old man met a child, 'Good day, my son!' says he, 'may you live as long as you have lived, and as much more, and thrice as much as all this, and if God give you one year in addition to the others, you will be just a century old:'—what was the lad's age?" It may be observed that none of the problems in this collection are very complicated. The title, in some copies, tells us that they were made *ad acuendos juvenes.*

9. The other sciences, as well as Arithmetic, were often the subject of questions intended at the same time to try the knowledge, and to exercise the ingenuity of the person questioned. Among the most curious tracts of this kind are the dialogues which go under the name of Saturn and Solomon, or, in one case, of Adrian and Rithæus.* The subjects of these dialogues are sometimes scriptural notions, and at others fragments of popular science, but in most cases they are of a legendary character. Thus, to the question, "Where does the sun shine at night?" the answer is that it shines in three places, first in the belly of the whale called Leviathan, next it shines in hell, and afterwards it shines on the island which is called Glith, where the souls of holy men rest till doomsday. Again, to the question, "Where is a man's mind?" the answer is, "In his head, and it comes out at his mouth." "Tell me where resteth the soul of man, when his body sleepeth?" is another question:—"I tell thee it is in three places, in the brain, or in the heart, or in the blood." Among other things we are in-

* The dialogue between Saturn and Solomon is printed in Thorpe's Analecta, p. 95, and that between Adrian and Rithæus in the Altdeutsche Blätter, vol. ii. p. 189. (Leipzig, 1838.)

formed that there are in the world fifty-two species of birds, thirty-four kinds of snakes, and thirty-six kinds of fishes, which shows the very limited knowledge of our forefathers in natural history. At Cambridge there are also preserved some fragments of a metrical Anglo-Saxon dialogue between Solomon and Saturn, in which the questions discussed are much more mystical than those which we find in the prose. There is also printed among the works of Alcuin, a Latin tract entitled *Disputatio inter Pippinum et Alcuinum*,* which bears in some parts a great resemblance to these dialogues. Among a multitude of other questions, we find some in this tract that are of a most fantastic character, such for example as,—"How is man placed? like a candle in the wind.—What is the forehead? the image of the mind.—What is the sky? a rolling sphere.—What is man? a painter of the earth.—What is grass? the garment of the earth.—What are herbs? the friends of the physicians, and the praise of cooks." The following definitions of a ship remind us of the metaphorical language of Anglo-Saxon poetry—"a ship is a wandering house, a hostle wherever you will, a traveller that leaves no footsteps, a neighbour of the sand." After going through a variety of other questions, more or less singular, the dialogue at last becomes a mere collection of enigmas, such as, "What is that, from which if you take the head, it becomes higher?" *Answer*:—"Go to your bed, and there you will find it." The joke seems to lie in the ambiguity of the expression: as it is not the bed, but the head, which is raised higher, when removed from the bed.

10. No class of popular literature was so general a favourite among the Anglo-Saxons as enigmas and rid-

* Alcuini Opera, tom. ii. p. 352.

dles, and they form an important part of the literary remains of our forefathers. Collections of Anglo-Latin Ænigmata, such as those of Aldhelm, were composed at a very early period. They were imitations of a still older Latin tract of this description, which was also popular among the Anglo-Saxons, under the title of *Symposii Ænigmata*, and which has been frequently printed; but whether this title implies that it was written by a person named Symposius, or whether it only means that they are *symposiaca ænigmata*, or, as we might say, 'nuts to crack over our wine,' is a question among the learned*; though the introductory lines would lead us to conclude that they were written with a view to this latter object. They have sometimes been attributed, but apparently without any good reason, to Lactantius. The riddles in this collection are expressed in triplets; they are often so contrived as to convey information under the cloak of amusement, and they sometimes present us with an elegant sentiment or a pretty idea. The subject of the following is a ship:—

Longa feror velox formosæ filia silvæ,
Innumera pariter comitum stipante caterva;
Curro vias multas vestigia nulla relinquens.

The idea contained in the following is not new:—

Est nova nostrarum cunctis captura ferarum,
Ut siquid capias et tu tibi ferre recuses,
Et quod non capias tecum tamen ipse reportas.

The subject of the next is a violet. In the second line

* The MS. Reg. 12 C. XXIII. contains early copies of the Ænigmata of Aldhelm, Symposius, and Tahtwin, and another collection under the name of Eusebius. Two early but imperfect copies of the Ænigmata Symposii are also preserved in MS. Reg. 15 B. XIX., and another more modern in MS. Cotton. Vespas. B. XXIII.

there seems to be a pun in the word *spiritus* which has not the odour of great antiquity about it.

Magna quidem non sum, sed inest mihi maxima virtus ;
Spiritus est magnus, quamvis sim corpore parvo ;
Nec mihi germen habet noxam, nec culpa ruborem.

Some of these enigmas are curious as illustrating incidents of private life. The subject of the following, which bears a different title in different manuscripts, is certainly some kind of liquor composed of three principal ingredients : according to the gloss in the margin of the oldest manuscript, these were honey, wine, and pepper.

Tres olim fuimus qui nomine jungimur uno,
Ex tribus est unus, tres et miscentur in uno ;
Quisque bonus per se, melior qui continet omnes.

11. Aldhelm confesses that he was but an imitator of Symposius ; but his ænigmata are deficient in that simplicity of sentiment and expression, which he found in his models. There needs no greater proof, how complicated and far-fetched they are, than the immense number of glossarial explanations with which they are accompanied in the MS. preserved in the British Museum. The following, perhaps, possesses as much simplicity as any we could select, but the last line is a remarkable specimen of that sinking in poetry of which its writer has often cause to plead guilty. Its subject is the Wind.

Cernere me nulli possunt nec prendere palmis,
Argutum vocis crepitum cito pando per orbem,
Viribus horrisonis valeo confringere quercus,
Nam superos ego pulso polos, et rura peragro.

The next is so peculiarly literary, that, although it needs some explanation, we can hardly pass it over. Its subject is the alphabet : it will perhaps be enough to say that in the third line *ferro* is explained in the gloss by *stilo graphico*, that the *terni fratres* are the three fingers which

hold the pen, and the *incerta mater* the pen itself, "it being uncertain whether this were a crow or goose quill, or a reed."*

Nos denæ et septem genitæ sine voce sorores,
Sex alias nothas non dicimus adnumerandas,
Nascimur ex ferro rursus ferro moribundæ,
Necnon et volucris penna volitantis ad æthram :
Terni nos fratres incerta matre crearunt ;
Qui cupit instanter sitiens audire, docemus,
Tum cito prompta damus rogitanti verba silenter.

12. But by far the most curious and interesting collection of early enigmas that exists, is the large one in Anglo-Saxon verse, which occupies a considerable portion of the Exeter manuscript. From their intentional obscurity, and from the uncommon words with which they abound, many of these riddles are at present altogether unintelligible; but where they can be translated with any certainty, they are by no means devoid either of beauty or interest. The following, for example, seems to give us the first traces of that doughty hero, John Barleycorn, so famous in the days of ballad-singing.†

Biþ foldan dæl	A part of the earth is
fægre ge-gierwed,	prepared beautifully,
mid þy heardestan,	with the hardest,
and mid þy scearpestan,	and with the sharpest,
and mid þy grymmestan	and with the grimmest
gumena gestreona,	of the productions of men,
corfen sworfen,	cut and .....,
cyrred þyrred,	turned and dried,
bunden wunden,	bound and twisted,

* i. ignoramus utrum cum penna corvina, vel anserina, sive calamo, perscriptæ simus. Glossa, in MS. Reg. 12, C. xxiii.

† This riddle affords us an example how certain ideas run through the popular literature of different nations at all periods. M. Jubinal, in his Nouveau Recueil de Contes, Dits, Fabliaux, etc. (vol. i. 8vo. Paris, 1839), p. 251, has printed an early French fabliau, "Le Martyre de Saint Baccus," where the god of the vine takes the place of Sir John Barleycorn, just as the juice of the grape in the country where it was composed occupies the place of the liquor of which the English hero was a personification.

blæced wæced,	bleached and awakened,
frætwed geatwed,	ornamented and poured out,
feorran læded	carried afar
to durum dryhta,	to the doors of people,
dream biδ in innan	it is joy in the inside
cwicra wihta,	of living creatures,
clengeδ lengeδ,	it knocks and slights
þara þe ær lifgende	those, of whom before while alive
longe hwile	a long while
wilna bruceδ,	it obeys the will,
and no wiδ-spriceδ,	and expostulateth not,
and þonne æfter deaþe	and then after death
deman on-ginneδ,	it takes upon it to judge,
meldan mislice.	to talk variously.
Micel is to hycganne	It is greatly to seek
wis-fæstum menn	by the wisest man,
hwæt seo wiht ys.	what this creature is.

(Exet. MS. fol. 107, v°.)*

The subject of another seems to be the Aurelia of the butterfly, and its transformations; by which it would appear that our forefathers were at times diligent observers of nature—

Ic seah turf tredan,	I saw tread over the turf
x. wæron ealra,	ten in all,

* This riddle is curious as exhibiting a repetition of rhiming words, like those which have been attempted by some of the lighter poets of the present day. Single lines of this kind are not uncommon scattered over the Anglo-Saxon poetry of the best age, as "wíde and síde," (*wide and broad*) in Beowulf and Cædmon; "blowan and growan," (to blossom and to grow) in the Ex. MS. fol. 109, r°; &c. We find sometimes three such rhyming words, as "flód blód ge-wód" (blood pervaded the flood), Cædm. p. 207. In the Exeter MS. there is one whole poem (which was published by Conybeare), written entirely in rhymes of the most fantastic description, as, for instance,

flah-mah fliteδ,
flan-mon hwiteδ,
burg-sorg biteδ,
bald-ald þwiteδ,
wræc-fæc wriþeδ,
wráþ-áδ smiteδ, &c.

The whole of these verses are extremely obscure and difficult to understand, a proof that rhime was a great trial of the ingenuity of the writer, and by no means congenial to the language.

vi. ge-broþor,
and hera sweoster mid,
hæfdon feorg cwico;
fell hongedon
sweotol and ge-syne
on seles wæge,
anra gehwylces
ne wæs hyra ængum þy wyrs,
ne side þy sarra,
þeah hy swa sceoldon,
reafe bi-rofene,
rodra weardes
meahtum a-weahte,
muþum slitan
haswe blede;
hrægl biδ ge-niwad,
þam þe ær forδ-cymene
frætwe leton
licgan on laste
ge-witan lond tredan.
(Ex. MS. fol. 104, r°.)

six brothers,
and their sisters with them,
they had a living soul;
they hanged their skins,
openly and manifestly
on the wall of the hall,
to any one of them all
it was none the worse,
nor his side the sorer,
although they should thus,
bereaved of covering,
[and] awakened by the might
of the guardian of the skies,
bite with their mouths
the rough leaves;
clothing is renewed
to those who before coming forth
let their ornaments
lie in their track,
to depart over the earth.

The Anglo-Saxons were especially partial to riddles founded on Scripture, thinking, perhaps, that they exhibited in solving them their acquaintance with the sacred volume. The subject of the following must be the patriarch Lot and his two daughters and their two sons.—

Wær sæt æt wine,
mid his wifum twam,
and his twegen suno,
and his twa dohtor,
swase ge-sweostor
and hyre suno twegen,
freolico frum-bearn;
fæder wæs þær-inne
þara æþelinga
æghwæδres,
mid eam and nefa:
ealra wæron fife
eorla and idesa
in-sittendra.
(Ex. MS. fol. 112, v°.)

There sat a man at his wine,
with his two wives,
and his two sons,
and his two daughters,
own sisters,
and their two sons,
comely first-born children;
the father was there
of each one
of the noble ones,
with the uncle and the nephew;
there were five in all
men and women
sitting there.

Of the next, it is not so easy to give a probable solution—

Ic eom wunder-licu wiht,	I am a wonderful creature,
ne mæg word sprecan,	I may not speak a word,
mældan for monnum,	nor converse before men,
þeah ic muþ hæbbe,	though I have a mouth,
wide wombe:	with a spacious belly:
ic wæs on ceole,	I was in a ship,
and mines cnosles ma.	with more of my race.

(Ex. MS. fol. 105, r°.)

§ VI. *The Higher Branches of Science.*

1. It has been already observed that science, as cultivated by the Anglo-Saxons, was almost entirely founded upon older foreign authorities. One of the most popular of these authorities was Isidore, a Spanish Christian, who lived at the beginning of the seventh century, and who published a manual of science under the title of *De Naturis Rerum*, as well as a larger work entitled *Etymologiæ*, or *Origines*, which is a kind of nomenclature, accompanied with definitions, of nearly every thing that existed, from the highest attributes of the Deity, through all the different regions of science and art, down to the most insignificant of children's games. In the higher branches of science, the Saxons followed principally those writers of the time of the Roman Empire, who were then peculiarly styled "the Philosophers;" such, for example, as Macrobius and Apuleius. Bede, and the Anglo-Saxon scholars of that and the following age, quote frequently such writers as Dionysius Exiguus, and Victor Aquitanus. The popularity of certain treatises appears, in some cases, to have arisen from their accidental introduction into England at an early period. This, perhaps, was the case with Cicero's translation of Aratus, and the prose *Astronomica* of Hyginus which accompanies it; in the Harleian library,* are preserved a few leaves of what may have

* MS. Harl. No. 647. An account of this MS. was contributed to the

been the very copy of this work that was first brought into our island; for it seems to have been written in the seventh, or early in the eighth century; the pictures bear every mark of having been painted by a foreign artist, and there can be little doubt that it was the prototype of the other manuscripts of the same book which were written in England in the ninth and tenth centuries, although neither in the text nor drawings are they absolutely literal copies.* Aratus, in Cicero's Latin version, and Hyginus, were the chief authorities of the Anglo-Saxons, not only for the forms and positions of the Constellations, but also for the details of Grecian and Roman mythology, with which their names were so closely connected. The scientific writings of Boethius do not appear to have been much read till the latter end of the Anglo-Saxon period.

2. Geometry is found in the Anglo-Saxon lists of sciences; but to what extent, or in what form it was studied, we have no very certain indications. Tradition, in after-times, gave to the reign of King Athelstan the honour of the first introduction of Euclid's Elements,† although we are not acquainted with any English manuscript of that work which belongs to an earlier date than the twelfth century, when it was translated into Latin by Athelard of Bath. It seems probable, indeed, that the Anglo-Saxons, when they spoke of geometry, understood nothing more than simple mensuration; and we have no reason for believing that they had any acquaintance with mathematics as a pure and abstract science. The

24th vol. of the Archæologia by Mr. Ottley, who, by a series of inconclusive arguments, endeavoured to show that it is of the second or third century.

* MS. Harl. No. 2506, probably of the beginning of the ninth century, and MS. Cotton. Tiber. B. v. of the tenth century. The latter is one of the most interesting volumes for the illustration of the history of Anglo-Saxon science, that exists.

† See Rara Mathematica (edited by Mr. Halliwell), p. 56.

great dissensions about the true time of celebrating Easter, which had been felt so severely by the Anglo-Saxon church, had given a peculiar turn to numerical calculations. The object which many of the early Anglo-Saxon scholars had chiefly in view in their visits to Rome, was not more to obtain a knowledge of the arguments by which the Romish church there defended its doctrine on this subject, than to learn the calculations on which its variations depended; and on their return, they made a powerful use of both in their controversies with the partizans of the contrary system. These calculations were long afterwards the business of the arithmeticians (rym-cræftige),* and those who were skilful in "circle-craft" (on circule-cræfte);† and the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of all periods are filled with tracts and tables connected with this all-engrossing subject, under the title of *De Computo*, or *De Computo Ecclesiastico*.

3. The Anglo-Saxons rather took notice of, than observed, the various phenomena of the heavens. They were interested in them simply so far as they were supposed to influence the seasons which were favourable or otherwise to the husbandman or the sailor; or with an eye to their more mystical connexion with the destinies of individuals or of kingdoms. Anglo-Saxon manuscripts abound in tables of prognostications of the weather, and of the good or bad influence of the lunar and solar changes. Although sea-faring men were the chief *observers*,‡ yet even they confided so little in the certainty of such prognostications, that, rather than trust to them,

* Metrical Menology, v. 89, ed. Fox. † Ib. v. 132.

‡ The metrical translator of Boethius quotes the authority of sailors even for the names of the planets:—

þone Saturnus	Which Saturn
sund-buenda	the sea-farers
hataþ.	call.

they preferred choosing the two calmest months of the year, June and July, called, on that account, the earlier and later sailing-months (liðe-monaðs), for their longer voyages. Some of the best scholars not only suspected that there were errors in the *authorised* astronomical calculations, but were extremely puzzled by accidental observations, which disagreed with the statements of the books they followed. In the year 798, considerable sensation was caused upon the continent by the planet Mars, which, under certain circumstances, had been found to remain beneath the horizon much longer than it should have done, according to "the books of the philosophers." In answer to a letter from Charlemagne, Alcuin, after entering at some length into the subject, goes on to observe: — "However, what has now happened to the planet Mars alone, the same thing is frequently observed in these parts with respect to all the five planets, namely, that they remain longer under the horizon than is stated in the books of the ancients which are our guides. And perhaps the rising and setting of the stars, as observed by us who dwell in these northern parts, vary from the observations of those who live in the eastern and southern parts of the world, where chiefly flourished the 'Masters' who set forth for us the laws and courses of the heaven and of the planets. For many things are changed, as your own wisdom knows perfectly well, by diversity of place."* Alcuin's modern editor conjectures, from this passage, that

* Quod vero de sola Martis stella modo evenit, hoc et de omnibus quinque stellis errantibus in his partibus sæpius solet evenire, ut diutius abscondantur quam regularis pagina veterum decantat. Et forte non æqualiter, nobis in his partibus Borealibus conversantibus, ortus et occasus siderum evenit, sicut illis, qui in Orientalibus vel Meridianis partibus mundi morantur, ubi maxime fuere Magistri qui nobis rationes et cursus cœli et stellarum ediderunt. Nam multa ex locorum diversitate, sicut vestra optime novit sapientia, immutantur. Alcuin. Epist. ad domnum regem, p. 58. Operum tom. I.

the Anglo-Saxon scholar had made such great advances in the study of science as already to suspect the true form of the earth. It is certain that observations made systematically with moderately good instruments, in pursuance of the train of reasoning which Alcuin here states, would have led to its discovery. The passage shows, at all events, that the wisest of the Anglo-Saxons were conscious of the imperfections of the system they were pursuing.

4. To some scholar of the tenth century, we owe a comprehensive treatise in the Anglo-Saxon language on the principal astronomical phenomena, designedly explained in a simple manner, and calculated for the level of ordinary capacities. From the numerous copies which still remain of this work, we may conclude that it was extremely popular in its day.* Yet it has hitherto been scarcely noticed by modern scholars, and indeed it is not unfrequently found buried among collections on the computus, so as very easily to escape attention. This tract gives us a very fair, and on the whole a very favourable, view of the popular science of the period when, among the Anglo-Saxons, knowledge was in such treatises diffused among the many, instead of being restricted in a learned language to the few. The writer of this book begins by stating that night is the effect of the earth's shadow, when the earth itself is between us and the sun.†

* Our extracts are taken from a copy in MS. Cotton. Titus D. xxvii. which seems to have been written for the use of *nuns*. There are three or four other copies in the British Museum (one in Tiber. B. v, quoted above), besides what are to be found at Oxford and Cambridge. We believe this tract will be printed, a thing certainly much to be desired, in an appendix to a History of the Mathematics in England during the middle ages, by J. O. Halliwell, Esq.

† Ure eorðlice niht soðlice cymð þurh þære eorðan sceade, þonne seo sunne gæð on æ'fnunge under þissere eorðan; þonne bið þære eorðan brádnys betwux ús and þæra sunnan, þæt we hyre leoman lihtinge nabbað oððæt heo eft on oðerne ende up-astíhð. MS. Cott. Titus, D. xxvii. fol. 30, v°. *Our earthly night truly comes by the earth's shadow when the sun goes in the*

After explaining the moon's changes, as a matter arising naturally out of the former subject, he goes on to tell us how, from sunset to sunrise, the night is divided into seven parts, namely—1, twilight, or "evening's gloaming;" 2, evening; 3, the hour of silence, when everything goes to rest (*conticinium*); 4, midnight; 5, cock crowing; 6, dawn; 7, daybreak, or the period which intervenes between dawn and sunrise.* The account of the year, and its seasons, divisions, and duration, leads to the definition of the lunar, as contradistinguished from the solar year, and this affords us a remarkable specimen of the popular mode of explaining science which was used by our forefathers: "Now," says the writer, "you may understand that the man who goes round one house makes a lesser course than he who goes round the whole town; and so the moon has his course to run sooner on the lesser circuit than the sun has on the greater; this is the moon's year."†

evening under this earth; then is the earth's broadness between us and the sun, so that we have not the illumination of her shine until she again rises up at the other end. As in the other Germanic tongues, the sun is feminine, and the moon masculine, in Anglo-Saxon and early English.

* Seo niht hæfð seofon dælas, fram þære sunnan setlunge oð hyre upgang: án þæra dæla is *crepusculum*, þæt is æfen-glóma; oðer is *vesperum*, þæt is æfen, þonne se æfen-steorra betwux repsunge æt-eowað; þridde is *conticinium*, þonne ealle þing suwiað on heora reste; feorða is *intempestum*, þæt is mid-niht; fifta is *gallicinium*, þæt is han-cred; syxta is *matutinum*, oððe *aurora*, þæt is dæg-red; seofoða is *diluculum*, þæt is ærne merien, betwux þam dæg-rede and sunnan up-gange. *Ib.* fol. 32, v°. *The night has seven parts, from the sun's setting to her upgoing: one of these parts is* crepusculum, *that is even's gloaming; the second is* vesperum, *that is even, when the even star shows itself in the interval between light and dark; the third is* conticinium, *when all things are silent in their rest; the fourth is* intempestum, *that is midnight; the fifth is* gallicinium, *that is cock-crowing; the sixth is* matutinum, *or* aurora, *that is dawn; the seventh is* diluculum, *that is early morning, between dawn and the sun's upgoing.*

† Nu miht þu understándan, þæt læssan ymbe-gang hæfð se mann ðe gæð onbuton án hús, þonne se ðe ealle þa burh be-gæð; swa eac se mona hæfð

5. The world, in the larger sense of the word (*mundus*, *κόσμος*), was designated among the Anglo-Saxons by a name borrowed from their old mythological ideas, *middan-geard*, or the middle yard or region, which was afterwards gradually corrupted into the old English word "middle-earth." "All that is within the firmament," says the tract just mentioned, "is called middan-geard, or the world. The firmament is the ethereal heaven, adorned with many stars; the heaven, and sea, and earth, are called the world. The firmament is perpetually turning round about us, under this earth and above, and there is an incalculable space between it and the earth. Four-and-twenty hours have passed, that is one day and one night, before it is once turned round, and all the stars which are fixed in it turn round with it. The earth stands in the centre, by God's power so fixed, that it never swerves either higher or lower than the Almighty Creator, who holds all things without labour, established it. Every sea, although it be deep, has its bottom on the earth, and the earth supports all seas, and the ocean, and all fountains and rivers run through it; as the veins lie in a man's body, so lie the veins of water throughout the earth."*

his ryne hraðor aúrnen on þam læssan ymb-hwyrfte, þonne seo sunne hæbbe on þam máran ; þis is þæs mónan geár. *Ib.* fol. 35, r°.

* *Ib.* fol. 37, v°. *De mundo.* Middan-geard is ge-haten eall þæt binnan þam *firmamentum* is. *Firmamentum* is þeos roderlice heofen, mid manegum steorrum amét ; seo heofen, and sæ', and eorðe, synd ge-hatene middan-geard. Seo *firmamentum* tyrnð symle on-butan ús under þissere eorðan and bufon, ac þær is ún-ge-rím fæc betwux hire and þære eorðan ; feower and twentig tida beoð agáne, þæt is án dæg and án niht, ær þam þe heo beo æne ymb-tyrnd, and ealle þa steorran þe hyre on fæste synd, túrniað on-butan mid hyre. Seo oðer stent on æle-middan, þurh Godes mihte swa ge-fæstnod, þæt heo næfre ne by'hð ufor ne neoðor, þonne se ælmihtiga scyppend þe ealle þing hylt buton ge-swínce hi ge-staðelode. Ælc sæ', þeah þe heo deóp sy, hæfð grúnd on þære eorðan, and seo eorðe abyrð ealle sæ', and þone garsecg, and ealle wyll-springas and éán þurh hyre yrnað ; swa swa æddran licgað on þæs mannes lichaman, swa licgað þa wæter-æddran geond þas eorðan ; næfð naðor ne sæ' ne éá nænne stede buton on eorðan.

The north and south stars, as we are told in another place, of which the latter is never seen by men, are fixed, and are the poles of the axis on which the firmament turns. Falling stars are igneous sparks thrown from the constellations, like sparks that fly from coals in the fire.* The earth itself "resembles a pine-nut, and the sun glides about it, by God's ordinance, and on the end where it shines it is day by means of the sun's light, whilst the end which it leaves is covered with darkness until it return again."† The writer of this treatise, in one or two instances, mentions and confutes what appeared then to the learned to be the popular errors of their age, such as that of "some unlearned priests" who said that leap-year had been caused by Joshua when he made the sun stand still.‡ The priests, it will be observed, are frequently the butt of the sneers of the scholars in the tenth century.

6. Such were the notions inculcated by the popular scientific books among our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, many of them erroneous in themselves, but at the same time consonant with the doctrines of the greatest scholars who had preceded, or who were contemporary. The range, however, of these books must have been narrow, in comparison with the mass of the people who were uninstructed. The ideas adopted by the latter were far more erroneous, and were often the mere legends of the popular mythology, as we see by such writings as the dialogues of Saturn and Salomon, and Adrian and Rithæus, which were probably

* *Ib.* fol. 45.

† Seo eorðe stent on ge-licnesse anre pinn-hnyte, and seo sunne glít on-búton be Godes ge-setnysse, and on þone ende þe heo scinð is dæg þurh hyre lihtinge, and se ende þe heo forlæ't bið mid þeostrum ofer-þeaht, oððæt heo eft þyder ge-néahlæce. *Ib.* fol. 39, v°.

‡ *Ib.* fol. 41, r°.

intended for recitation among the common people. In the latter of these dialogues, to the question "how large is the sun?" the reply is, "larger than the earth," and this is deduced from the circumstance that it shines on all parts of the earth. The spherical form of our planet was universally acknowledged, although it was erroneously placed in the centre of the system. An early Latin writer compares the universe to an egg, in which the earth is the yolk, with the sea surrounding it resembling the white of the egg, while the firmament, supposed to be inclosed in fire, is the shell.* It is doubtful, however, if it were not the most common impression that this round mass on which we live swam in the water, that the part we inhabit and know was a small portion of the surface which stood above the waves, and that the sun dived into the ocean each evening, and arose out of it on the following morn.

7. The ideas which the Anglo-Saxons held with regard to that portion of the earth, which was then believed to be alone habitable, were derived indirectly or immediately from the writings of the Ancients; and they were on the whole more correct than might be expected. Their maps were undoubtedly made after Roman models. A map of the tenth century, in the British Museum, accompanies the Periegesis of Priscian,† which, with the slight sketch given by Orosius, and the work of Solinus, were the chief autho-

* Est ergo terra elementum in medio mundi positum, et ideo infimum. In omni enim spherico solum medium est infimum. Mundus nempe ad similitudinem ovi dispositus est. Namque terra est in medio ut meditullium in ovo; circa hanc est aqua, ut circa meditullium albumen; circa aqua[m] est aer, ut pannid'es *(sic)* continens albumen; extra vero est ignis cætera concludens, admodum testæ ovi. MS. Burney, No. 216, fol. 99, r°. of the twelfth century. In an English poem of the thirteenth century, in MS. Harl. 2277, fol. 133, we have the following definition of the earth,—

"Urthe is amidde the see, a lute *(little)* bal and round."

† MS. Cotton. Tiber. B. v. fol. 58, v°.

rities in geography. Books of cosmography were sought eagerly at an early period,* and we need not be surprised if their popularity depended most frequently on the number of wonderful relations which they contained. The stories of this kind given by Pliny the Elder, and reproduced by Solinus, were the foundation of all the extravagant fables concerning the wonders of distant lands which were so widely prevalent during the Middle Ages; but the vague manner in which these writers spoke of them was not enough for the curiosity of the multitude, and the outline they furnished was soon filled up in spurious works, like the famous letter of Alexander the Great to his preceptor Aristotle, in which the conqueror of the East describes minutely all the monsters of India. This tract must have been written at an early period, for we find an Anglo-Saxon translation of it, with some other pieces of a similar kind, in manuscripts of the tenth century.†

8. We find the Anglo-Saxons at an early period distinguished by the same spirit of adventure, which has been so active and fruitful among their descendants. They were anxious to explore the distant countries, whose existence had been made known to them by the books which the missionaries imported. Even so early as the seventh century they were in the habit of going to Rome by sea, a voyage in which the pilgrims necessarily incurred many

* Bonifac. Epist. p. 111. Some person writes to Bishop Lulla,—Cæterum libri cosmographicorum necdum nobis ad manum venerunt: nec alia apud nos exemplaria, nisi picturis et litteris permolesta. The latter part of the sentence is curious, though at present not quite clear.

† The Anglo-Saxon version of Aristotle's letter is found in MS. Cotton. Vitell. A. xv. along with Beowulf and Judith. It is preceded by an Anglo-Saxon tract on the wonders of the East, which occurs again in Anglo-Saxon and Latin in MS. Cott. Tiberius B. v.; in both places accompanied by drawings of a very extraordinary kind, and, in the latter MS. many of them executed in a style much superior to the generality of Anglo-Saxon pictures.

perils. At the end of this century, a Frankish bishop named Arculf, who was returning from the Holy Land, and had visited Constantinople, Damascus, and Alexandria in Egypt, as well as many of the islands of the Mediterranean, was thrown by bad weather on the western coasts of England, where he became acquainted with the abbot Adamnan. The latter carefully stored up the information which the traveller communicated to him, and afterwards committed it to writing in a treatise which is still preserved. It is probable, indeed, from many circumstances, that the Anglo-Saxons themselves made frequent visits, not only to Italy, but also to the East. King Alfred, who in this, as in other things, merited well the character given him by historians of being "a diligent investigator of unknown things" (ignotarum rerum investigationi solerter se jungebat), sent Sighelm, bishop of Sherburn, in 883, to India to visit the scene of the labours of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew; and Sighelm not only reached in safety this distant land, but he brought back with him many of its productions, and particularly some gems and relics which were still preserved in his church in the time of William of Malmsbury.* The present day cannot furnish a more intelligent account of a voyage of discovery, than that taken down by Alfred from the mouths of Ohthere and Wulfstan, one of whom had sailed to the North Cape, and the other along the northern shores of the Baltic, and which that monarch has inserted in his own version of Orosius. The map of the tenth century, mentioned above, is far more correct than the generality of maps which we find in old manuscripts at a later period; its chief inaccuracy lies in the distorted shape given to Africa, which is here a long narrow slip of

* See the Saxon Chronicle, and W. Malmsb. p. 248.

land running out from east to west; but the coasts of India and Eastern Asia are not ill defined, there are few of the fabulous indications which appear afterwards in this part of the world, and Paradise does not occupy the place of the isles of Japan, as it did after the voyage of St. Brandan became popular in the twelfth century.

§ VII. *The Natural Sciences—Medicine.*

1. The systematical study of natural history, in any of its branches, has never been cultivated among a people who had not reached a high state of civilization. Many of the operations of nature are indeed of that wonderful character, that they cannot fail to attract at all times the attention of the observer; and although these insulated observations were often the cause of the wildest errors among the philosophers of a comparatively barbarous age, yet they contained the germs of modern science. The marvellous transformations which accompanied the change of the creeping worm into the elegant butterfly, the singular habits of some animals, and the instincts of others, were the groundwork of many a superstitious fable. Even the fossil remains of a former world did not pass unnoticed; in old writers, such for example as William of Newbury in the twelfth century, we find many tales of animals imbedded in rocks, accidentally released from their imprisonment, which were undoubtedly founded upon discoveries of fossils; and these remains perhaps also gave rise to the legends of dragons which brooded in caves over hidden treasures, and of other animals no less extraordinary and fearful than the forms which are presented to us by the researches of modern geologists. The foreign books on natural history, which the Anglo-Saxons seem to have possessed, were by no means calculated to give them any very enlightened notions on the subject, for

they consisted chiefly of fabulous narratives of the imaginary monsters which were supposed to live under the burning skies of India and Africa, or of those moralizations of the ordinary instincts of some animals which a little later became more universally popular under the title of *Bestiaries*.

2. The learning of the ancients was communicated to the people of the middle ages by two distinct roads. First, it was introduced along with the ancient literature, when those who received it, only just emerging from the depths of ignorance, were least capable of cultivating it with advantage, and when, from their preconceived ideas and various other causes, it was much disfigured, and very partially developed. Secondly, after having found a more favourable soil among the Arabians in the east, whose vast conquests and more enlarged field of scientific observation were naturally attended with a proportionate intellectual developement, it became the ground-work of a school which, at a later period, was carried directly to the West, and gradually took the place of the barbarous half-Romanized school which had there existed—we can hardly say flourished—through several ages. This was more particularly the case with the medical and chemical sciences, which, less than any others, the Anglo-Saxons were capable of receiving from their instructors. Before the influence of the Arabian school was felt, even the elixir and the philosopher's stone were not thought of, and the medical knowledge of our early forefathers was confined within very narrow limits. In the last struggles of the Roman power, and during the inroads of the barbarous tribes before whom it fell, all the ancient practical knowledge of medicine and surgery must have disappeared. The books which remained were almost useless, not only from this want of practical skill, but also from the impos-

sibility of procuring most of the articles which were enumerated in them, among people who had no certain commercial intercourse with distant parts of the world. This was felt strongly among the Anglo-Saxons; and one of Boniface's correspondents, while earnestly desiring to be remembered, in case that adventurous missionary should meet with any medical books which were not known in England, complains at the same time of the difficulty of using them on account of the foreign ingredients which those works prescribed.* The consequence of this was, that the Anglo-Saxons either returned to the old superstitious practices and receipts which had been used before their conversion to Christianity, or submitted to the authority of certain spurious books which were equally absurd and superstitious, and which appear to have been made with the object of remedying the difficulties above-mentioned. The book which seems to have exerted the greatest influence on the science of medicine among the Anglo-Saxons, was a Latin herbal published under the name of Apuleius, and containing, as it was pretended, the doctrines taught to Achilles by Chiron the centaur. This spurious treatise, with a tract attributed to Antonius Musa on the virtues of the herb betony, and another bearing the title of *Medicina Animalium*, and the name of Sextus Philosophus,† formed, in an Anglo-Saxon translation, of which several copies are still extant, the popular text-book among the old physicians.‡ We may cite, as a fair speci-

* Nec non et si quos sæcularis scientiæ libros nobis ignotos adepturi sitis, ut sunt de medicinalibus, quorum copia est aliqua apud nos, sed tamen segmenta ultra marina, quæ in eis scripta comperimus, ignota nobis sunt et difficilia ad adipiscendum. Bonif. Epist. p. 102.

† These three treatises in Latin were edited at Ravensburg, in 1539, by Gabriel Humelberg, who even at this recent period believed most religiously in all the absurdities they contain.

‡ Two MSS. of this Anglo-Saxon herbal, both of the tenth century, are

men of the character of this herbal, the account of the herb betony, which is almost a literal version from Antonius Musa. This plant, we are told, should be gathered in the month of August; no *iron* was to be used in digging it up; and, when duly prepared, it was not only a powerful antidote against many diseases, but also a sure and efficient defence against spectres, fearful sights, and dreams.*

3. In addition to this herbal, we find amongst Anglo-Saxon manuscripts several medical works and collections of receipts, which are interesting to us not only for the light they throw upon the early history of medicine in our island, but also because they make us acquainted with the classes of diseases chiefly prevalent among the Anglo-Saxons, and thus illustrate collaterally the state of society in general. This class of works, indeed, forms rather an important part of the remains of the literature of these

found in the British Museum, MS. Cotton. Vitellius, C. III. and MS. Harl. No. 585. Another of the same age is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The Harleian MS. No. 6258, B. contains a copy of the same work, somewhat enlarged, in semi-Saxon, of about the end of the twelfth century. The Cottonian MS. and the older Harleian MS. are full of drawings of plants, some of them not ill executed.

* Deos wyrt þe man *betonican* nemneð, heo biþ cenned on mædum, and on clænum dun-landum, and on ge-friþedum stowum. Seo ðeah gehwæþer ge þæs mannes sawle ge his lichoman; hio hyne scyldeþ wið unhirum nihtgendum and wið egeslicum ge-sihðum and swefnum. And seo wyrt byþ swyþe haligu; and þus þu hi scealt niman, on Agustes monðe, butan iserne; and þonne þu hi ge-numene hæbbe, ahryse þa moldan óf, þæt hyre nan-wiht on ne clyfie, and þonne drig hi on sceade swyþe þearle, and mid wyrttruman mid ealle ge-wyrt to duste, bruc hyre þonne, and hyre byrig, þonne þu beþurfe. MS. Cotton. Vitell. C. III. fol. 16, r°. *This plant, which they call betony, it grows in meadows, and on clean hill-lands, and in inclosed places. It is profitable both to man's soul and to his body; it shields him against nightly monsters, and against fearful visions and dreams. And the plant is very holy; and thus thou shalt take it, in the month of August, without iron; and when thou hast taken it, shake the mould off, so that none adhere to it, and then dry it in the shade very much, and with the root and all do it to powder, use it then, and taste it, when thou hast need.*

early ages, and deserves more attention than has been hitherto bestowed upon it. Among the manuscripts in the British Museum which are commonly quoted as the Royal Manuscripts, and which were formerly kept at St. James's Palace, we find a very curious book on medicine, splendidly written in the Anglo-Saxon language, apparently of the earlier part of the tenth century, and probably at that time the property of a physician of some eminence.* This book is divided into two parts, the first relating chiefly to the treatment of external diseases, and the second to inward diseases, and those of a more complicated nature. A large proportion of the cases here provided against, are outward wounds, arising sometimes from accident, but more frequently from personal violence, the prevalence of which we may assume from the minutely detailed penalties imposed upon it by the Anglo-Saxon laws. The numerous receipts against the bites of adders and other venomous reptiles, show that these latter were infinitely more numerous, and probably more various, than they are at present, and aid us in conceiving the picture which our island then presented to the eye, thinly inhabited, ill-cultivated, and covered with marshes, woods, and wilds. We find also in the work above mentioned many receipts against the effects of poison; and (which appears singular enough) there are more provisions against diseases of the eye than against any other complaint. It is perhaps in some measure to the prevalence of this latter class of diseases in former times, that we owe the preservation of the numerous superstitions connected with springs of water; and the peasantry in many parts of our island still use them, not on account of the purity of the water, but with a belief in some peculiar attributes of the well itself.

* MS. Reg. 12 D. xvii.

4. Although this treatise is not a herbal, still the ingredients mentioned are chiefly vegetables, though mixed up sometimes with other substances, such as ale and honey, of which latter commodity the consumption was very great among the Anglo-Saxons, and, less frequently, fat, oil, or wine. The powerful medicinal effects produced by vegetable mixtures, and the facility with which they were obtained, will easily explain the great reputation they enjoyed in an uncultivated age; but the real causes of diseases were little known, the connexion between the complaint and the remedy was seldom or very imperfectly understood, and the success of the latter must have been extremely problematical. The object generally aimed at seems to have been to produce a sudden and strong impression on the system, the effect of which must often have proved fatal. One of the receipts against the head-ache, given in this book, directs that a salve composed of rue and mustard-seed should be applied to the side of the head which was free from pain, evidently with the expectation of producing a sudden nervous re-action.* So again, for the cure of sore eyes, we are directed to make a paste of strawberry plants and *pepper*, which is to be diluted for use in sweet wine.† There are few diseases of which the history is so obscure as that of the small-pox. This obscurity arises partly

* Wiþ þon ilcan: ge-nim fæt-ful grenre rudan leafa, and senepes sædes cucler fulne, ge-gnid to-gædere, do æges þæt hwite to cucler fulne, þæt sio sealf sie þicce, smire mid feþere on þa healfe þe sar ne sie. MS. Reg. 12 D. xvii. fol. 7, v°.—*Against the same (disease): take a vessel full of the leaves of green rue, and a spoonful of mustard seed, pound them together, add a spoonful of the white of an egg, that the salve may be thick, smear it with a feather on that side which is not sore.*

† Þus mon sceal eag-sealfe wyrcean: ge-nim streaw-berian wisan nioþowearde, and pipor, ge-cnuwa wel, do on claþ, be-bind fæste, lege on ge-swet win, læt ge-dreopan on þa eagan ænne dropan. Ib. fol. 13, r°.—*Thus shall a man make eye-salve; take the lower parts of strawberry plants, and pepper, knead them well together, put them in a cloth, tie them up fast, lay them in sweet wine, let one drop fall on the eye.*

from the difficulty of identifying the disease under the names which seem to have been given to it at different times. In our own language it was formerly called simply the *pockes*, the plural form of a word which signified nothing more than *pustules*. In the Anglo-Saxon treatise of which we are now speaking, we find two or three receipts against the "pockes" (wiþ poccum), which is perhaps the same disease we now call small-pox, although, by the number and simple character of the prescriptions, it would appear either not to have been very prevalent, or else to have possessed a less dangerous character than that which it assumed in later times. On the appearance of the first symptoms of the disease, bleeding is ordered, and a bowl-full of melted butter is recommended to be taken inwardly; if the pustules be broken out, the physician is directed to pick them all out carefully with a thorn, and to pour a drop of wine or alder syrup in the place, which process was to prevent them from leaving any marks.* The terrible effects of hydrophobia seem not to have been much known at this time; two or three receipts are given against the bite of mad dogs, but they are all very simple, the most remarkable being plasters of boiled onions, ashes, fat, and honey, or of plantain, mulberries, and fat, to be applied to the wound.†

* Wiþ poccum: swiðe sceal món blod lætan, and drincan amylte buteran bollan fulne; gif hie ut-slean, ælcne man sceall aweg adelfan mid þorne, and þonne win oððe alor-drenc drype on innan, þonne ne beoð hy ge-syne. Ib. fol. 40, r°.—*Against pockes: very much shall one let blood, and drink a bowl-ful of melted butter; if they strike out, one shall dig each away with a thorn, and then drop wine or alder-drink in, then they will not be seen.* This last observation (the anxiety to hinder marks from being left) seems to identify the disease.

† Wiþ wede-hundes slite: . . . . twa cipan oððe þreo, seoþ, ge-bræd ón ahsan, meng wið rysle and hunige, lege ón, . . . éft, ge-ním weg-brædan, moran, ge-cna wiþ rysle, do on þæt dolh, þonne ascrypð hio þæt ater aweg. *Ib.* fol. 54, r°.—*Against the bite of a mad-dog: take two onions or three, boil them, spread them in ashes, mix them with fat and honey, lay it on. . .*

5. Surgical operations, among the Anglo-Saxons, were few and rude. They consisted chiefly in bleeding (the success of which was supposed to depend less on the condition of the patient, than on the choice of the proper time for its performance, according to certain calendars of good and evil days); the application of poultices to draw out humours and reduce inflammations; setting broken bones, and staunching wounds. Honey was the substance generally used for cleansing external wounds; before application, it was to be warmed at the fire, and mixed with salt.* Another operation, described in the Anglo-Saxon medical treatise, gives us no very favourable idea of surgical practice: "if a man have a limb cut off, be it finger, or foot, or hand, if the marrow be out, take sheep's marrow boiled, lay it to the other marrow, bind it very well at night."† Perhaps the most scientific prescription in the whole volume is a medicated bath, ordered to be used for the cure of a disease which was probably the dropsy; this bath was to consist of a strong decoction of various herbs, among which are enumerated wild marjoram, broom, ivy, mugwort, and henbane; while immersed in it, the patient was to drink a decoction of other herbs, among which we find the all-efficient herb betony, with centaury, agrimony, red-nettles, sage, herb Alexander, &c.; and the liquor in which these latter were

Again, take way-broad (plantain) and mulberries, knead them with fat, put this on the wound, then it drives away the venom.

* To wunde clæsnunge: ge-nim clæne hunig, ge-wyrme to fyre, ge-do þonne on clæne fæt, do sealt to, and hrere oþ þæt hit hæbbe briwes þicnesse, smire þa wunde mid, þonne fullaƀ hio. *Ib.* fol. 34, v°.—*For cleansing of a wound: take clean honey, warm it at the fire, then put it in a clean vessel, add salt to it, and stir it till it has the thickness of pottage, smear the wound with it, then it cleanses it.*

† Gif men si lim óf aslegen, finger oƀƀe fót oþþe hand: gif þæt mearh ute sie, ge-nim sceapes mearh ge-soden, lege on þæt oþer mearh, awriþ swiƀe wel neahterne. *Ib.* fol. 36, r°.

to be boiled, was one that we should hardly expect to find mentioned at that time, namely, *Welsh ale.**

6. The Anglo-Saxon treatise in the Royal Library shows, in a very remarkable manner, that the practice of medicine, amongst our forefathers, as well as among the other branches of the great Teutonic race, was a strange mixture of science and superstition, even in the hands of its most skilful professors. The ingredients which the physician used, frequently owed their virtues to some accidental circumstance with which, in the minds of the people, they were connected; as in the case of one receipt in which those particular herbs only are declared to be efficient "which grow spontaneously, and are not planted by the hand of man."† Much of their efficiency also depended upon the day on which they were administered, or on which the patient fell ill, and this again was regulated by the changes of the moon. The Anglo-Saxon manuscripts contain many lists of the attributes of each day of the lunar month, as they were supposed to be good or evil for sickness and the various operations of life. For example, they inform us that "The first day of the moon is propitious for all kinds of work; he who falls ill on that day, will languish long, and suffer much; the infant

* Bæþ wiþ þam miclan lice: eolone, bróm, ifig, muc-wyrt, ælf-þone, beolone, cottuc, efelastan, wyl ón wætere swiþe, geót on bydene, and sitte ón. Drince þisne drenc wiþþon: betonican, curmille, hofe, agrimonia, spring-wyrt, reade netle, elehtre, salvie, singrene, alexandria, sie ge-worht óf Wiliscúm ealaðˇ, drince on þam baþe, and ne læte ón þone eþm. *Ib.* fol. 29, v°.—Welsh ale is mentioned at a still earlier date in the laws of Ine, § 70, and (A.D. 852) in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Wulfred scolde gife twa tunnan fulle hlutres aloðˇ, and ten mittan Wælsces aloðˇ—*Wulfred should give two tuns full of clear ale, and ten mittan or measures of Welsh ale.*

† éft wiþ þon ilcan: ge-ním tun-cersan sio þe self weaxeðˇ and món ne sæwðˇ, do in þa nosu þæt se stænc mæge on þæt heafod and þæt seaw. MS. Reg. 12 D. xvii. fol. 8, v°.—*Again, against the same (i. e. a broken head): take of garden cress that which grows of itself, and man sows not, put it in the nose that the smell and the juice may go into the head.*

who is then born will live. The second is also a prosperous day, good for buying, selling, embarking on shipboard, beginning a journey, sowing, grafting, arranging a garden, ploughing land; theft committed on this day will be soon and easily detected; a person who falls sick will soon recover; the child born will grow fast, but will not live long. . . . . The fourth day of the moon is good for beginning works, as building mills and opening drains; the child born on this day will be a great politician. . . . . The sixth day of the moon is a favourable day for hunting. . . . . The eighth day is good for changing bees; but he who falls sick on this day will suffer a long illness, and will not recover. . . . . A child born on the tenth day of the moon will be a great traveller; and, if born on the twenty-first, he will become a bold robber."* These superstitious feelings were not always confined to the manner or time of treating diseases, but they also extended to the diseases themselves. The causes of many outward affections of the body were too apparent to be easily overlooked, but inward diseases often assumed a more mysterious character, which baffled the utmost skill of the physician. They were then believed to be caused immediately by evil beings, the elves, according to the creed of the people, or the demons, according to that of the monks; or else they were produced by the charm of the witch, or by the sinister influence of the evil eye.†

* MS. Cotton. Titus, D. xxviii. fol. 27, *etc.*

† Mugwort (*artemisia*) was believed to possess extraordinary virtues against such visitations. Þonne hwa siðfæt onginnan wille, ðonne ge-nime he him on hand þas wyrte *artemesiam*, and hæbbe mid him, ðonne ne ongyt he na micel to ge-swynce þæs siðes; and eac heo afligð deoful-seocnyssa, and on þam huse þe he hy inne hæfð, heo forbyt yfele lacnunga, and eac heo awendeð yfelra manna eagan. MS. Cotton. Vitel. C. iii. fol. 21, v°. and MS. Harl. No. 585, fol. 18, v°.—*When any man will begin a journey, let him take in his hand the herb artemisia, and have it with him, then he will not be much fatigued in his journey; and also it drives away devil-sicknesses,*

Fevers, more particularly, were attributed to such causes, and this class of diseases, which occupies a considerable portion of the second book of the great Anglo-Saxon medical work, introduces us there to a numerous collection of charms and incantations, and to a list of diseases which received their names from the imaginary beings who were supposed to have sent them. In these cases, the physician trusted no longer to the simple virtues of his herbs; but he sought to drive away these unwelcome visitors by religious exorcisms; or to pacify them, and induce them to carry their visitations to some other object, by means of counter-charms, which were derived from a still more superstitious age. The latter object was generally effected by charming the disease into a stick, or a piece of wood, which was thrown *across a highway*, as an effectual separation from the patient, and there it waited to be communicated to the first person who picked up the stick: this process, still familiar to the peasantry in the less enlightened parts of England, was, among the Anglo-Saxons, an approved remedy in the hands of the professors of the healing art.* One example from the medical book we have so often quoted, will be sufficient to illustrate the character of the religious charms: it is a "drink" composed of herbs for

and in the house where it is kept, it hinders evil cures, and also it averts the eyes of evil men. So in the great medical book, Wiþ miclum gonge ofer land; þy læs he teorige, mucg-wyrt nime him on hand, oþþe do on his sco, þy læs he meþige, and þonne he niman wille, ær sunnan upgange cweþe þas word ærest, *Tellamte artemesia, ne lassus sům in via*, gesena hie þonne þu up teo. MS. Reg. 12 D. xvii. fol. 57, r°.—*Against a great journey over land: lest he become faint, let him take mugwort in his hand, or put it in his shoe lest he become weary, and when he will gather it, before sunrise, say these words first*—Tollam te, artemesia, ne lassus sim in via—*loudly, when thou pullest it up.*

* Wiþ þon gif hunta ge-bite mannan, þæt is swiþra, sleah þry scearpan neah from weardes, læt yrnan þæt blod ón grenne sticcan hæslenne, weorp þonne ofer weg aweg, þonne ne biþ nan yfel. MS. Reg. 12 D. xvii. fol. 43, v°.

a person labouring under a disease caused by evil spirits, and is to be administered in a *church bell*:—"Take thrift grass (?), yarrow, elehtre, betony, penny-grass, carruc, fane, fennel, church-wort, christmas-wort, lovage; make them into a potion with clear ale, sing seven masses over the plants daily, and add holy water, and drip the draught into every drink that he shall drink afterwards, and sing the psalm *Beati immaculati*, and *Exsurgat*, and *Salvum me fac, Deus*, and then let him drink the draught out of the church bell, and after he has drunk it, let the mass priest sing over him *Domine sancte pater omnipotens.*"*

7. The subject of charms is intimately connected with the history of the Anglo-Saxon alphabet. It is well known that what we generally term Anglo-Saxon letters, with the exception of þ, *(th)*, ð, *(dh)*, and ƿ (*w*), are nothing more than the common Roman characters, as they were introduced by the missionaries, and used in the early manuscripts. Our ancestors, previous to their conversion, possessed an alphabet peculiar to themselves, the letters of which were in their own language designated by the name of *runes*, and which, before their literature was committed to writing, served all the purposes to which they were accustomed to apply them; for these were confined to an occasional inscription, or to certain magical

* Drenc wiþ feond-sceocum men, of ciric-bellan to drincanne: gyþrife glæs, gearwe, elehtre, betonice, attorlaþe, carrúc, fane, finul, ciric-ragu, Cristes-mæles ragu, lufestice, ge-wyrc þone drenc óf hluttrum ealað, ge-singe seofon mæssan ofer þám wyrtum dogerleác, and [do] halig wæter to, and drype ón ælcne drincan þone drenc þe he drincan wille éft, and singe þone sealm, *Beati inmaculati*, and *Exurgát*, and *Salvum me fác Deus*, and þonne drince þone drenc óf ciric-bellan, and se mæsse-preost hím singe æfter þam drence þis ofer, *Domine sancte pater omnipotens*. *Ib.* fol. 51, v°. It is rather uncertain what plants are designated by some of the names in the foregoing receipt. It may be observed here, that, in quoting from inedited Saxon treatises, in the present Essay, the accents are given precisely as they stand in the manuscripts.

phrases that were engraved on their arms, and on pieces of wood, or other materials, to be carried about their persons. From this practice, and from the rarity of inscriptions, the letters themselves were an object of superstition, and their name became equivalent to magic and mystery. Their form rendered them inconvenient for writing extensively; but long after the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, the runic alphabet was preserved, and we find it in manuscripts written as late as the twelfth century. Although these letters were still used for various superstitious purposes, yet they were not unfrequently applied to other objects. As each letter had a significant name, we often find it used playfully in serious poems, instead of the word which designates it, as, for instance, in one of the poems of the Vercelli Manuscript, and even in the Romance of Beowulf. Among the riddles in the Exeter Manuscript, and in the Metrical Salomon and Saturn, these letters are frequently inserted with the intention of increasing the obscurity of the subject, sometimes with the signification of words, at others merely as letters, while in some cases the two systems seem to be mixed, and we are often obliged to read them backwards, before we can discover the mystery which is concealed under them. The runic alphabet, and the signification of its letters, form also the subject of a very curious Anglo-Saxon poem printed from a manuscript, now lost, by Hickes in his Thesaurus, and reprinted by William Grimm in a small treatise in German on the Teutonic Runes. Many of the crosses and other strange marks which are found among the superstitious medical receipts, represent probably the Runic charms of an earlier date.

§ VIII. *Fate of the Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature.*

1. During the period of which any written monuments in the Anglo-Saxon language are preserved, extending from the eighth century to the Norman conquest, it seems not to have undergone any great change. But soon after the entrance of the Normans, its use as a written language was superseded, first by the Latin tongue, which, introduced by the foreign ecclesiastics, again took the station which it had occupied in the eighth century, and continued to flourish until the middle of the thirteenth; and secondly, by the Anglo-Norman, a Neo-Latin dialect, which was the vernacular tongue of the invaders, and was not laid aside until the beginning of the fourteenth century. It is probable that the Anglo-Saxon tongue preserved its purity until the beginning of the twelfth century; but it then began to experience the influence of the great political revolution which had been effected in England. It was by degrees subjected to a general organic change of many of its letters; syllables were cut short in the pronunciation; and the final terminations and inflections of words began to be softened down, until at a later period they were entirely lost. In the latter years of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, which closes with A.D. 1155, we see that the language had already degenerated much from what it was fifty years before; and the change is still more apparent in the fragments lately published by Sir Thomas Phillipps. We have scarcely any other documents in the English tongue which can be ascribed with certainty to the twelfth century; but when we come to the age of Layamon, in the earlier half of the thirteenth, we find the transformation so complete, that it may be doubted whether the uncorrupted language of the Anglo-Saxon writings could then be

understood without much difficulty. During the thirteenth century, this organic change proceeded so rapidly, that there is quite as wide a difference between the language of Layamon and that which was written at the beginning of the fourteenth century, as there had been between the former and that written in the tenth, or as there is between the English language as written in the reign of Edward the Second, and the same tongue as we possess it at the present day. The form of our language during the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century is generally termed *Semi-Saxon;* from that period to the time of the Reformation it has received from modern philologists the name of *Middle-English.*

2. The greatest destruction of Anglo-Saxon books happened during the numerous inroads of the Danes, from the ninth to the eleventh century, when so many of the richest libraries were committed to the flames, along with the monasteries in which they were deposited. Under the rule of the Normans, from the Conquest to the beginning of the thirteenth century, our old chroniclers relate many stories illustrative of the contempt with which the Anglo-Norman barons regarded the language of those whose rights they had usurped; but the more serious disputes related to charters rather than books, the latter (except when from time to time some English monk took them down) were allowed to lie neglected in the dust of monastic libraries, and the only losses which they sustained seem to have been the natural consequence of dirt and damp. But after this period the case was entirely changed, and, as they could no longer be read even by Englishmen, they had to suffer from various causes. A few monastic catalogues are still preserved in manuscripts of that age, and they contain the titles of many Anglo-Saxon books, which, however, are generally

described as being "old and useless."* Accordingly, we find that when the monks were in want of vellum, they scrupled not to take one of these "old and useless" Anglo-Saxon manuscripts; and, having carefully scraped out the original letters, to make use of it for writing a new work, which they considered more important and necessary. One of these *palimpsests* is preserved in the Library of Jesus College, Cambridge, in which a splendid copy of the Anglo-Saxon Homilies of Alfric has been erased to make room for Latin decretals, although the destruction of the original was not so complete as to hinder us from tracing here and there a few words, particularly about the margins of the leaves. Sometimes, also, when the monks were at a loss for boards to bind their books, they took a few folios of these useless old manuscripts, and pasted them together; as was the case with the leaves discovered by Sir Thomas Phillipps in the covers of a volume preserved in Worcester Cathedral. The loss which Anglo-Saxon literature sustained by these means must have been very great. At the time of the Reformation, when, by the dissolution of the monasteries, their libraries of manuscripts were scattered in all directions, the number which perished cannot now be calculated, though the fragments which are found in the old bindings of books are sufficient to convince us that it was not small. The Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, however, suffered much less at this time than the others,

* See, for example, a catalogue of the books in the Library at Glastonbury, made in 1248, and printed by Wanley, in the Introduction to his Catalogue of Saxon Manuscripts, from a MS. in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. We find several entries like the following:—

Item, duo Anglica, vetusta et inutilia.
Item, Sermones Anglici, vetusti, inutiles.
Passionale Sanctorum Anglice scriptum, vetust. inutile.

The second of these items was a volume of Anglo-Saxon homilies.

owing to the eagerness of the Reformers to collect them; yet we still find a few fragments in the covers of books printed during the sixteenth century.

3. The two great collectors of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the sixteenth century were Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Robert Cotton. At the time of the Reformation, when church property was not always regarded with the same respect as at present, Parker found no difficulty in transferring most of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts which were found in the libraries of cathedrals and churches into his own collection. Sir Robert Cotton was equally successful in gathering together those which had passed, by the plunder of the monasteries, into the stalls of booksellers or the hands of private individuals; and these two libraries, the former now preserved in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and the latter in the British Museum, are still the richest in Anglo-Saxon literature. Next in the scale we must place the Bodleian Library at Oxford, with the University Library at Cambridge, and one or two of the college libraries. The Royal Library in the British Museum is perhaps the richest of them all in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of Latin books, and this, as well as the Harleian Library, and some other public and private collections, possess also a few scattered volumes written in the vernacular tongue.

4. It has been already observed that public attention was first directed to the remains of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, by the support which they afforded to the arguments of the Reformers.* Soon after the middle of the sixteenth century, Fox the martyrologist, and William L'Isle,

* It has been said, that so early as the fifteenth century, the monks of Tavistock applied themselves to the study of the Anglo-Saxon language, and that they even printed a grammar. No traces, however, of such a book can now be found; and it may have been a mere error arising from the indefinite manner in which some people formerly applied the term Anglo-Saxon.

under the auspices of Archbishop Parker, prosecuted the study of the Anglo-Saxon language, and published the Anglo-Saxon version of the Gospels and some of the Homilies. But their knowledge of the language was very imperfect, and confined entirely to the prose writings; for the difficulties they had to encounter, without grammar or dictionary, were too formidable to allow of their making much progress. About the middle of the seventeenth century flourished Spelman, Gibson, Whelock, and Junius, who gave to the study of the Anglo-Saxon language a new character. The first of these scholars was preparing to establish an Anglo-Saxon professorship in the University of Cambridge, when his intentions were thwarted by the turbulent times which followed. Sir Henry Spelman published the Ecclesiastical Laws in 1639; and his son edited the Anglo-Saxon Psalter in the following year. In 1643, Whelock printed Alfred's translation of Bede, with part of the Chronicle. Junius gave an edition of the poetry attributed to Cædmon, in 1655. In 1659, Somner published the first Anglo-Saxon Dictionary. From this period to the end of the century, numerous distinguished scholars were working zealously to bring to light new documents of Anglo-Saxon literature, and to facilitate the study of the language. Among others we may enumerate Bishop Gibson, Thwaites, Rawlinson, Hickes, and his niece Elizabeth Elstob. In 1689, Hickes published the first Anglo-Saxon Grammar, a book containing, as might naturally be expected, many errors, which later discoveries, and a more extensive reading, have corrected, but which, nevertheless, was then of great service to the cause of Anglo-Saxon philology. In 1692, Bishop Gibson printed a more complete edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; and in 1698, Rawlinson published King Alfred's Translation of Boethius, which was followed in 1699 by

Thwaites's edition of the Heptateuch. In 1701, an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary was published in an octavo volume by Thomas Benson; and four years afterwards, appeared the celebrated Thesaurus of Dr. Hickes.

5. After the beginning of the eighteenth century, the study of the Anglo-Saxon language soon fell into neglect; and it was long regarded as a mere toy for the amusement of antiquaries. The only works of any importance which were given to the world during this long period, were the Laws, by Wilkins, in 1721 and 1737; Alfred's Bede, by Smith, in 1722; and the Great Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, by Lye and Manning, in 1772, a monument of unwearied industry, but disfigured by a multitude of errors. In 1773, Daines Barrington published an ill executed edition of King Alfred's translation of Orosius. In 1750, the Anglo-Saxon Professorship was founded at Oxford, and brought into effect in 1795.

6. We owe the revival of the study of the Anglo-Saxon language and literature at the present day, in some measure to foreign scholars, whose attention was frequently given to it at the latter end of the last, and the beginning of the present century. In 1815, Thorkelin, a Dane, published the first edition of the Romance of Beowulf, which is, however, a very incorrect book. A few years later, Erasmus Rask at Copenhagen, and Dr. James Grimm in Germany, began to apply a more enlarged system of philology to the language. About the same time, the literature of our forefathers began to attract the attention of scholars in England, and was industriously cultivated by Conybeare, Ingram, and Bosworth; and, after the space of a century, the place formerly occupied by Elizabeth Elstob, was supplied by a worthy successor in Miss Gurney. The systems of Rask and Grimm, as applied to Anglo-Saxon philology, have since taken a more substan-

tial form under the hands of two native scholars, Thorpe and Kemble. Thorpe's translation of Rask is the best Grammar which has yet appeared. A portable Dictionary has been published recently by Dr. Bosworth; so that the impediments which formerly hindered the study of the Anglo-Saxon language are now entirely removed. Yet still, from the deficiency in many classes of documents, and from the recent period at which it has been studied in a true philological spirit, it is a language which is but imperfectly known.

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