THE STUDY OF ANGLO-SAXON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE STUDY OF ANGLO-SAXON

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
JOSEPH BOSWORTH

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PREFACE

FOR the past twenty-eight years I have had the privilege of occupying the Chair of Anglo-Saxon founded in the University of Cambridge by Joseph Bosworth. Now, on the eve of my retirement, I may perhaps be allowed to review briefly the position of Anglo-Saxon studies in our Universities and elsewhere in the light of my experience.

Bosworth's bequest was framed on broad and liberal lines. The Professor's duties are to promote the study of the Anglo-Saxon language and the languages cognate therewith, together with the antiquities and history of the Anglo-Saxons. In short, they are to cover the whole field of Anglo-Saxon studies.

Unfortunately, when Anglo-Saxon came to be introduced into the curricula of our Universities a different line was taken. For reasons which I have explained in the last chapter, it was treated from a narrowly linguistic point of view and cut away from all its historical and cultural connections. What would be thought of a Latin course which took no account of ancient Rome, or indeed of any question except the phonetic process by which—in later times—the word 'homo' became 'uomo' or 'homme'? As a result, Anglo-Saxon studies have come to be regarded in a somewhat unsympathetic light both in the Universities and in the country generally. Their true character and scope were lost to view.

In the last thirty years better provision has been made for Anglo-Saxon studies in various Universities.

Cambridge has led the way in this movement, and has also extended the scope of these studies, so as ta include the Celtic and Norse peoples and the earlier history of this country. For the promotion of Anglo-Saxon studies themselves I think we may fairly claim that our students have done more than those of any other University in the world.

Much ignorance and prejudice, however, still pre* vails. Apparently there are still many people who would admit our studies in the Universities only in a diluted form and as an adjunct to a more popular subject. Outside the Universities there is a wide-spread impression that Anglo-Saxon and kindred studies are unattractive and impracticable for the home student.

It is the purpose of this little book to point out the groundlessness of these ideas, and to give some indication of what our studies have to offer.

I do not claim that they are well suited for the mass teaching of young students, especially those whose education has been limited more or less to modern times. But for those students, whether young or old, who can project their minds back into the far past and visualise conditions of life different from our own, they have great attractions, if they are treated liberally and in all their various aspects and connections. It should be the primary object of a University course to bring out this variety of interest. But those who have not the opportunity of attending a University can do very much on their own account. Indeed I doubt whether these is any other subject which the home reader will find easier to take up in his spare time.

and ficom which he is likely to obtttn more interest and intellectual satisfaction.

The Anglo-Saxon period possessed a culture which vas of composite origin but developed a very distinctive individuality of its own. It differed greatly from both the preceding and the following periods, though it inherited much from the past and bequeathed much to later times. A good deal of the literature—which is the oldest in Europe after Latin and Greek—4s very interesting and attractive; and the same is true of the art, which the English snared with the other peoples of the British Isles. In the seventh and eighth centuries the English and the Irish were ahead of the rest of Europe in both literature and art, as well as in Latin learning.

Even more important perhaps is the long series of historical and legal records which cover the history of our country and our institutions for a period of nearly five centuries. Nowhere else in the world, I think, is it possible to trace so fully the transition from barbaric to civilised conditions of life, the growth of towns and trade and the beginnings of responsible government. These records are of the utmost value for the study of human institutions everywhere, though their significance is not yet sufficiently appreciated. They arc a heritage of which the Anglo-Saxon peoples throughout the world should be proud.

The age of our ancient culture deserves to be regarded by us—by all Anglo-Saxon peoples—with no lets respect than that of ancient Rome. Why this is tKWyetgenei^yreajgnisedlhavetjaedtoshowinthe second chapter. I have also tried to indicate, tbougb

very briefly, how these remarks apply—at least in some degree—to all the ancient peoples of our islands. All of them are well worthy of respectful attention and study.

Remember our earliest recorded contribution to philosophy, which dates from a time even before the arrival of the English. I mean the heresy which taught that man is naturally good. Could such a doctrine have originated anywhere except in this country?

CHAPTER I

THE LITERATURE AND MONUMENTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

IT is probable that all the Anglo-Saxon literature which has come down to our times owes its preservation, if not its origin, to the libraries of ecclesiastical foundations. Some very important MSS. still remain in the libraries of cathedrals, where they have rested for eight or nine centuries. The majority, however, seem to be derived from monasteries which were dissolved in the sixteenth century. Very many MSS. doubtless perished at this time; but those which have survived came into the possession of scholars, from whom they have in course of time found their way into the British Museum and various libraries at Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere.

It is a fortunate circumstance that a revival of interest in Anglo-Saxon records was taking place at the time when the monastic libraries were broken up. Attempts were now being made, with more or less success, to interpret records which had been neglected, and indeed unintelligible, for three or four centuries.

In view of their provenance it is not surprising that the great majority of Anglo-Saxon literary works which have survived are of religious or ecclesiastical character. They are such as would naturally be current in a religious house. If the library of a layman had been preserved, the case might possibly have been different But the educated laity were displaced

at the Noiman Conquest by foreigners. We know that some of them possessed books; but these presumably perished when their families were dispossessed

Much secular literature has without doubt been lost. That is clear from the fact that we have only fragments of several secular poems. But it may well be questioned whether the amount of written secular literature was at any time equal to that of ecclesiastical literature.

In this connection it is to be borne in mind that Anglo-Saxon literature, like all the literatures of northern Europe, had a dual origin. When the English invaded this country in the fifth century, they brought their own literature with them. This literature had doubtless had a long history; but it was not a written literature. The invaders had their own (Runic) form of writing—from which are derived our words 'write,' 'read' and 'book'—but they had no writing materials which could be used for literary purposes to any appreciable extent. In their minds, writing and literature were not associated ideas. Writing was used for such purposes as denoting ownership or sending messages, whereas literature was cultivated by memory (or improvisation) and recitation.

At a later date—whether from the Roman missionaries, who[1] arrived in 597, or from native or Irish sources—the English acquired a knowledge of Roman writing and writing materials, and also of Latin (ecclesiastical) literature, which was inseparably bound op therewith. Of mis new knowledge they soon took advantage; and before long a written literature was flourishing. Laws were written down in English at

a very early date; but for other—more strictly literary—purposes Latin was at first in general use, It would seem that for a time the cultivation of literature ran in two separate channels—one English, unwritten, secular and consisting mainly of poetry, the other Latin, written, ecclesiastical and consisting mainly of prose.

But a process of fusion began before the end of the seventh century. Subjects derived from Latin (ecclesiastical) literature began to be treated in English poems. Some of these may have been written down by the authors themselves; but the metre and style were those of traditional English poetry. On the other hand, poetry derived from English tradition began to be affected by ecclesiastical influence.

Only a few collections of Anglo-Saxon poetry have been preserved. Indeed the great majority of the poems which have come down to us are contained in one or other of four MSS. The total amount is not inconsiderable; but only a small proportion of it is derived from native English (secular) tradition. In scope and character this is similar in general to the oral poetry found among many other peoples, ancient and modern, whose civilisation was, or is, comparable with that of the ancient English.

Heroic narrative poetry is represented by one complete poem, of over 3,000 lines, and two short fragments. There can be no doubt, however, that these are merely the remains of an extensive body of poetry, embracing scores, perhaps hundreds, of themes. The subjects are the adventures of Teutonic—seldom English—heroes of the fourth, fifth **and**

sixth centuries, many of whom **are** known also from Scandinavian or German tradition. The scene is laid either in Scandinavian lands or on the Continent. This poetry clearly had an international circulation; **and** it should properly be described as 'Teutonic,' though it is better preserved in English than elsewhere. It was minstrel poetry, accompanied by the harp; and the *milieu* which it reflects is that of the royal courts of the period. The language is archaic, the style conventional, but dignified; and, in general, there is a fairly close resemblance to the Homeric poems. In 'Beowulf/ the only poem which has been preserved complete, the main action is occupied with adventures with supernatural monsters, including a fiery dragon. But this seems to have been exceptional; in nearly all the other stories which can be **traced,** the contests are between human opponents. Here also we may mention two other poems relating to the Heroic Age, 'Widsith* and 'Deor/ which are not strictly narrative, though the poets speak of their own experiences. The former contains long lists of **the heroes** and peoples of the Heroic Age.

Only a few historical poems relating to later times have come down to us. Two of these are important. One celebrates Aethelstan's victory at 'Brunanburh', in 937, over Constantine n, king of Scots, and Anlaf, king of Dublin. The other describes the **disaster which befell** Byrhtnoth, earl of Essex and his knights at Maldon, in 991, when they were attacked by a large force of pirates. This is in narrative form, though **its purpose** was **probably** to commemorate the fallen. **Only a** portion of it **has been preserved.**

Anglo-Saxon poets gave great attention to the

treatment of scenes and situations in which anonymous characters describe their feelings and experiences. Such poetry is, of course, common enough in folk-songs everywhere; but it is seldom found in the highly cultivated form which we find here. In "Hie Wanderer' the speaker is a knight who has lost hit lord, and is wandering, homeless, on the sea-shore. 'The Wife's Complaint' is the speech of a woman, who has been forsaken by her husband or lover, and ordered to live in a cave beneath an oak. The situation is not fully explained. 'The Husband's Message' is a letter from a prince who has had to go suddenly into exile; but he has surmounted his troubles, and now sends word to his wife to rejoin him. Many scholars regard this poem as a sequel to the preceding one.

Descriptive poetry was also much cultivated. The most striking example is 'The Ruin,' a short (mutilated) poem describing what is evidently a Roman building, apparently at Bath. The poet tries to visualise its former splendour; but he pictures it as occupied by an English military prince and his court.

Gnomic poetry was much in vogue—i.e. poetry which expresses the philosophy of the age in brief sentences, often indeed in the briefest possible form. Apart from gnomes which occur incidentally, whether singly or in short series, we have two poems wholly occupied with such matter. In these the 'gnome of observation' (e.g. 'it is the property of frost to freeze') predominates, just as in early Welsh poetry, whereas in most other languages the 'gnome of obligation' (e.g. 'thus ought one to act') is the more prevalent type. The Anglo-Saxon poems, however, employ the same formula for both types; and it is sometimes

uncertain whether we should translate by 'necessary* or 'characteristic/ The briefest form of gnomes may be illustrated by such a sentence as 'A shield is necessary for a brave, a ring for a bride, books for a student, sacrament for a saint, sins for a heathen.' But the monotony is broken from time to time by short descriptive passages, in which we get pictures of the dutiful queen, the mariner's wife welcoming her husband home, the sorrowful man consoling himself with minstrelsy, etc.

Anglo-Saxon poets were very fond of catalogues, which often throw a good deal of light on the life of the times. Some poems consist wholly of catalogues, e.g. of arts and crafts, and even of the unfortunate accidents by which men may lose their lives. Very similar themes were cultivated by the early Greek Iambic poets of the seventh and sixth centuries (B.C); and analogies are not seldom to be found in the poetry of backward peoples of to-day.

A number of metrical spells have also been preserved. Most of these are of interest to students of folklore; and occasionally they show relics of the mythology of heathen times.

Here too we may mention metrical riddles, of which there are nearly a hundred. They are short poems, describing the appearance or characteristics of some objector creature, which is to be guessed. Similar riddle poems are widespread among the ancient and backward peoples of Europe and other parts of the world. Most of the Anglo-Saxon riddles, however, seem to have been influenced in form by Latin riddles; some indeed are translations from Latin. They are concerned as a rule with secular subjects; but there is

no doubt that they were much cultivated for diversion in ecclesiastical, as well as lay, circles.

Tht amount of religious poetry which has survived is greater than that of secular poetry. The longer poems are mostly narrative, and derived partly frtyn the Bible—portions of Genesis, Exodus, Daniel and Judith—and partly from 'Lives' of Saints. The former vary a good deal. Sometimes they iAre little more than a paraphrase of the original, while at other times the subject is developed with great freedom. The latter belong to a class of literature which was widely current in the Dark Ages and later, both in prose and in verse. The Anglo-Saxon poems are, in general, of a far higher standard than their foreign and later counterparts; but it is difficult to escape from a feeling of incongruity between the subject-matter and the language and diction, which are derived from heroic poetry. The other poems are mainly homiletic or devotional. These again are usually of Latin origin, and have their counterparts in other languages, from the same period and later. The most striking, and perhaps the most original, of these is 'The Dream of the Rood,' in which the Cross appears to the poet in a dream and tells its story.

Anglo-Saxon secular poetry is wholly anonymous, apart from the poems 'Widsith' and *Deor/ which claim to be the work of poets of the Heroic Age on the Continent. And the same is true of all the longer religious poems, except four, which contain the name 'Cynewulf' in acrostics. The poet tells us nothing of his history, except that he had been converted from a wordly to a religious life; but his language suggests that he lived in the ninth century. Bede relates an

interesting story of a much earlier poet named Caedmon, a cowherd, in the service of St. Hild, abbess of Whitby, who died in 680. He is said to have received his inspiration from an angel in a dream. The story is of special interest as illustrating the devotion to poetry or music which prevailed at the time, even among poor people. When the villagers met together in the evening, they used to pass the harp round, and sing to it in turn; and Caedmon, who could sing nothing, always made his escape when he saw it coming in his direction.

Apart from laws, Anglo-Saxon prose literature is wholly based on Latin literary tradition. No sagas, derived from native oral tradition, like those of Iceland and Ireland, have been preserved. Story-telling was widely cultivated; but nothing has come down to us, except some short r£sum£es in Latin and French, from much later times. The most famous is the story of King Alfred and the cakes.

By far the most important work is the 'Saxon Chronicle,' a history of the country in the form of annals down to Norman times—extending in one text as late as 1154. The texts, of which six have survived, seem to have been written in various religious houses; towards the end of the period they are independent works. The Chronicle follows the lines of earlier Latin chronicles; and down to *c.* 800 nearly all the annals are translated from Latin. From this point, however, it was written in English; for more than three centuries it is an independent and original work, carried on by a long series of writers, and of the highest historical value.

Apart from the Chronicle, Anglo-Saxon prose

literature consists almost wholly of translations and of religious works, such as sermons, which follow Latin models. English seems to have displaced Latin as the vehicle of education about the beginning of the ninth century; and the necessity of translations is stressed by King Alfred in the Preface to his translation of Gregory the Great's 'Cura Pastoralis.' The last century before the Norman Conquest was a time of great activity in this direction. The translations include not only the Bible and numerous religious works of various kinds, but also scientific treatises and even romances; they are, in fact, representative of the Latin learning of the age. It is unfortunate that the literary men did not give more attention to original matter; for the little that we have, e.g. the accounts of voyages inserted by King Alfred in his translation of Orosius, is of an unusually interesting character.

In Latin literature of the Anglo-Saxon period, poetry is generally less important than prose. The poetry is, indeed, considerable in amount and varied in character, consisting of hymns, epitaphs, riddles, and even biographies and histories; but it is highly artificial and academic, and not calculated to make any great appeal to readers of to-day.

Latin prose literature is all-important for the period between 600 and 800. Throughout this time Latin seems to have been practically the only language for prose literature; and it was also the language of the monastic schools, which were founded soon after the establishment of Christianity. At first the records are scanty; but before the end of the seventh century there was a flourishing Latin literature, which soon

became the best in Europe. Bede (672-735) was the most learned man of his age; and the same is true of Alcuin towards the end of the eighth century. This literature embraced all departments of intellectual activity; but the works which have most interest for us are histories and biographies.

By far the most important of these works is Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History,' which—after a short sketch of the Roman period—traces the history of the Church in England from the arrival of Augustine, in 597, down to the year 731. It is our chief source of information for the history of the seventh century, secular as well as ecclesiastical. The plan is taken from Gregory of Tours* 'History of the Franks'; but we must confess that in human interest it falls far short of its model. Bede, who spent all his life in a monastery, had not the knowledge of the secular world—nor, we may add, the love of gossip—which makes Gregory's work so attractive. His own work is much more serious and ecclesiastical in tone. Yet there are passages which must interest any reader; we may instance the account of the poet Caedmon, and the debate at Edwin's court on the acceptance of Christianity. Bede is not without prejudices, especially in his attitude to the British Church; but his care and accuracy are beyond praise.

In addition to the larger works, of which we have Spoken, Latin letters of the eighth century contain a very considerable amount of interesting information. But soon after 800, Latin literature comes practically to an end. In his Preface to the 'Cura Pastoralis,' mentioned above, King Alfred says that at his accession there were hardly any persons in the country who

understood Latin. For nearly two centuries the only noteworthy Latin work is the 'Life of King Alfred* written, sooif after 887, by Asser, Bishop of Sherborne, a Welsh ecclesiastic from St. David*s; and the first half of this is translated from the Saxon Chronicle. Towards the end of the tenth century Latin biographies begin again, the most important of which are those of St. Edmund, St. Dunstan and St. Oswald (Archbishop of York). The knowledge of Latin was again widespread by this time; but the literature is of no great interest until after the Norman Conquest. Mention should perhaps be made of the 'Chronicle* of Aethelweard, which is a translation of the Saxon Chronicle. It is of interest chiefly because of the high position of its author, who was a member of the royal house and earl of the south-western counties at the beginning of the eleventh century.

After the Norman Conquest, Latin soon displaced Anglo-Saxon as the language of serious literature. The first half of the twelfth century saw the production of a number of Latin chronicles and histories of the Anglo-Saxon period, among which we may mention those of Florence of Worcester, Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury and Symeon of Durham. They are derived in the main from the Saxon Chronicle, though they also draw frequently from Bede and other Latin sources.

A large amount of legal literature has come down to us from the Anglo-Saxon period. This is of very varied character and of great interest and importance, not only for the history of law, but also for the light which it throws upon the life of the times. We have to distinguish between laws, including regulations of

various kinds, on the one hand, and legal documents of more or less personal reference.

The Laws issued by the various kings cover a period of more than four centuries. Unlike the Laws of the Teutonic peoples of the Continent, dating from the same period, which are all in Latin, our ancient Laws were all written in the vernacular, though in a few cases only a Latin translation has been preserved. They never attempt anything Ijke a codification, or complete statement, of the existing law. They are concerned with special circumstances arising from new conditions, or with the modification or regulation of usage relating to circumstances about which some doubt might arise; and they presuppose the existence of, a great body of unwritten law, which must have been preserved from time immemorial by oral tradition. They are an essentially native body of literature.

From the seventh century we have three series of Laws issued by kings of Kent. Those of Aethelberht, dating from *c.* 600, are the oldest English document which we possess. Much fuller and more interesting, however, are the Laws of Ine, king of Wessex, dating from *c,* 690—an invaluable source of information for the life of the period. From the next two centuries, down to the time of Alfred, no Laws have survived; but we know that some have been lost. From Alfred himself we have a series, and also from several of his successors. Some of the Laws are of general reference, while others apply only to certain subjects of to certain parts of the country.

Apart from the Laws of kings we have a number of regulations issued by local authorities and associations of various kinds, and dating from the tenth and

eleventh centuries. These also are in English, unless they are of a definitely ecclesiastical character.

Legal documents relating to individuals are extremely numerous. They are commonly known as 'charters'; but this term includes transactions of many kinds, e.g. grants of land or privileges, records of purchase, leases, agreements of various kinds, wills, remissions of dues and manumissions of slaves. The records in some of these varieties begin in the seventh century, in others much later.

Unlike the Laws, these documents are derived from Roman law. At first they seem to have been used only for grants to Churches or the representatives or founders of Churches. From the eighth century onwards we find also grants and sales to laymen; but the form of the documents still preserves an ecclesiastical character, e.g. in the invocation with which they begin and the curses which they invoke upon those who may seek to invalidate the transaction. At the end comes a list of the witnesses, including the king, if it is a royal grant; the names are accompanied by the sign of the cross. These lists are often Very long; and they are invaluable for historical purposes.

As might be expected from their origin, these documents were usually, if not always, written in Latin in early times. After *c.* 800, however, English becomes common; and from this time we find sometimes one language, sometimes the other, though Latin is the more frequent. Wills are almost always in English; and the same is true of the descriptions of the boundaries of estates, even when the grants themselves are in Latin.

For local history these records are of the utmost

importance. Very often the boundaries of an estate described in a grant are those of the corresponding parish to-day. But many of them, especially wills, also throw a great deal of light upon the life of the times, and thus compensate to some extent for the dearth of personal literature.

Many MSS., both Latin and Anglo-Saxon, contain full-page or half-page pictures, as well as a good deal of decorative writing, e.g. in capital letters. This art, like that of MS. writing itself, was of Roman origin; it was introduced into this country in the course of the seventh century. In pictures of the earlier period, down to the ninth century, the human figures—usually an Evangelist or David—are inferior to the decoration. The latter consists chiefly of interlaced work, which is sometimes of the greatest intricacy and skill. Notable examples are to be found in the Gospels written, *e.* 700, by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne. They have much in common with Irish art of the same time, or rather later. A remarkable feature of the earlier period, found also in France, is the fondness for grotesque animals—sometimes more or less naturalistic, sometimes elongated into snake-like or ribbon forms. The vine-scroll also occurs, but not so frequently.

In the tenth century a new style of art was introduced from the Continent. In this the decoration, which is now derived from the acanthus, is completely sub* ordinated to the figures. The latter now appear in groups, sometimes large groups, and often in move* ment. The scenes are usually illustrations of passages-

in the Bible; but representations of contemporary life also occur, as well as figures of certain English kings —Aethelstaii} Edgar, and Canute. Outline painting, or rather etching, was much in use.

Decorative metal work had been known to tjie English for ages before they came to this country. But .about this time it began to develop on new lines, like that of all the Teutonic peoples. The influence came from the Roman provinces, and perhaps partly from the East. The designs are partly geometrical patterns, partly patterns derived from debased foliage and from the heads and other portions of animals. This style of art can best be seen in the brooches, large numbers of which are found in heathen graves. In the course of the sixth century they came to be of great size and highly ornamental. Before the end of the century, however, new features appeared, especially cloissonne*e work, inset with garnets, interlaced patterns and animals of ribbon form. Buckles now began to take the place of brooches, and mounts for various articles are also found.

After the introduction of Christianity the objects buried with the dead become fewer and poorer; and consequently the metal work of the later periods has been much less frequently preserved. There ate, however, a number of examples which show designs similar to those which are found in the paintings, especially interlaced work and grotesque animals. The same is true of carved ivory objects, which are sometimes very elaborate. The most interesting is a small box, known as the 'Franks Casket,* which contains scenes from Roman legend and history, the Bible, etc., with long Runic inscriptions. Here also

reference must be made to the numerous coins of the period, chiefly silver, which extend over nearly five centuries, and are of great historical importance.

But the most interesting form of Anglo-Saxon art is that of sculpture in stone. The most striking examples are the crosses, which sometimes attained a height of over twenty feet. They have come down to us as a rule only in fragments, of which there are several thousand in the north of England, and a good number in the south of Scotland; in the midlands and the south of England they are not so numerous. Many of them, however, can be reconstructed. The designs are similar to those in paintings of the earlier period, with which the best examples are clearly contemporary. They consist of sacred figures, singly or in pairs, interlaced work, grotesque animals, etc.; but the vine-scroll—with or without (naturalistic) animals and birds—is far more frequent than in paintings, and usually occupies at least one side of the stem of the cross. A number of crosses bear inscriptions, from which it is clear that they were grave memorials. But it.is not at all certain that they were all of this origin; some of them stood in prominent positions towards the east end of churches. The cross at Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, perhaps the finest and best preserved of all, bears Latin inscriptions relating to the figure sculptures and Anglo-Saxon inscriptions (in Runic letters) containing extracts from •The Dream of the Rood' (cf. p. 7). It may be remarked here that Runic inscriptions are fairly numerous, both on stone monuments and on coins and other small (metal and ivory) objects. Anglo-Saxon epigraphy, however, has been much neglected.

Sculptured crosses are found also in Wales, Cornwall, Ireland and Celtic Scotland; it was probably from the Britons that the English learned to make them. But the chief designs, just as in painting, must have come from the Mediterranean in the seventh century. Some scholars indeed think that a few of our best examples are the work of Syrian sculptors. . After the ninth century the art declined, though crosses continued to be made in great numbers, even in the midlands and the south. The cross with 'wheel-head' now becomes the usual type; but the English examples are inferior to those of Ireland, where this type is practically universal. In other Celtic lands sculptured slabs—usually bearing a wheel-headed or other cross—are more common than crosses; and they occur also, though not so often, in England. Both figure and design sculpture is found also in the decoration of churches.

Architecture flourished in this country during the Roman period; but it is difficult to trace any building in stone or brick after *c.* 400. In the following centuries both the Britons and the English seem to have lived in houses of wood or of wattle and daub, and very many of them in more primitive structures* Stone churches of the Anglo-Saxon period are numerous; the earliest were built or restored almost immediately after the conversion of the English, from *c.* 600. But it is commonly believed at present that we have no secular stone buildings, or even foundations of such buildings dating from before the Norman Conquest.

The churches of the seventh and following centuries are of two different types. One type is very simple,

consisting of a nave, with a small rectangular chancel separated from it by a single arch. The origin of this type is uncertain. A perfect example is preserved at Escomb, near Bishop Auckland. The other type is much more complex. It consisted of a nave and apse. The nave was divided towards the east end by a triple 'arch of triumph,' while at the west end there was a narthex or porch, which sometimes extended along the whole width of the church. From the nave on either side, usually towards the east end, a door led into a side chapel, which was sometimes used as a burial chapel. Closely akin to this was a basilican type, in which the line of the chapels was continued to the west end by aisles, separated from the nave by a series of arches. Churches of the second type were often converted into basilican churches by the addition of aisles. The second type seems to have been introduced from abroad by Augustine and his followers, and is well known from a number of churches, especially in Kent, which are now wholly or partly in ruins. A very good example, with aisles added later, was the old church at Reculver, demolished at the beginning of last century. The church of Brixworth, near Northampton—the finest existing church of the Anglo-Saxon period—was originally a basilican church; but all the side buildings, together with the arch of triumph and the ends of the porch, were destroyed later, chiefly in the Anglo-Saxon period, so that the arches of the nave have now become external windows.

A large number of churches date from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The great majority of them are derived from the first of the types mentioned

above—the simple nave and chancel type. The basilican type, usually perhaps with an apse, also continued in use, though only a few examples have survived. But the architecture was affected by new influences, introduced from abroad. The churches of this period have certain distinctive characteristics, especially in the treatment of corners and of windows. But the most striking new feature is the tower at the west end. In older churches this was sometimes formed by raising a portion of the porch; but more usually it was a new structure trom the ground, built at the same time as the church. The finest example of a tower is that of the church of Earl's Barton, near Northampton.

There are, of course, many other monuments of the period, besides works of art. A number of dykes are known to have been frontier fortifications of Heptarchic times. The earthen ramparts of some towns probably date from the ninth and tenth centuries; and the medieval walls of other towns may have their foundations in similar structures, though others again —perhaps a greater number—go back to the Roman period. But all the monuments and records which we have noticed constitute only a fraction of what we have inherited from Anglo-Saxon times. Our towns themselves and our villages, our roads and boundaries, and the whole face of our countryside may be regarded in a sense as a legacy from that period, however much they owe to the work of previous ages. In our national life and institutions, which largely took shape in the same period, our indebtedness to it is more easily defined. These, however, are matters to which we shall have to return in the next chapter.

We have seen that elements of different origin are to be found in both the literature and the art of the Anglo-Saxon period. Some are of true English origin, brought by the invaders with them from their homes overseas, while others were acquired by them in this country, or introduced later from France and the Mediterranean, especially in the seventh century. In art the new (foreign) elements decidedly predominate; truly English elements may be said to survive only in the minor arts, e.g. pottery and (to some extent) metal working, and even here not in pure forms. In literature the English elements were more persistent; yet they were gradually losing ground throughout the period. The new elements, however, were doubtless affected by—or adapted to—English tradition in almost all things; and from the seventh century onwards our civilisation may be described as composite. The elements most difficult to estimate are those which were derived from the Britons. It will be enough to say here that these were probably much more important than has generally been recognised.

CHAPTER II.

THE VALUE OF ANGLO-SAXON STUDJES

ANGLO-SAXON studies have a value both for their own sake and for the light which they throw on later times. As the latter is at present more generally recognised, it may perhaps be convenient to take this first.

It is hardly necessary to discuss the importance of Anglo-Saxon for the history of the English language. No one will question the fact that it is essential. For all practical purposes Anglo-Saxon may be regarded as the ancestor of our language of to-day. To speak more accurately, it is our language at an earlier stage in its history. That history can be traced without a break from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present time. There was indeed a long period, of two centuries or more, after Anglo-Saxon times, from which we have few works of any literary value or interest; but records of some kind or other are never wholly wanting.

It is true that the form of language in which nearly **all** Anglo-Saxon literary works are preserved is not strictly ancestral to our present literary language. The fact that the English came ultimately to **be** united in one kingdom.by Alfred the Great and his* successors had the effect of making their **language, the language** of Wessex, into **a** 'standard English,* recognised and taught in schools **throughout the greater part** of the country. In **little more than half a century after** the Norman **Conquest mis literary language was lost; and centuries elapsed before the**

appearance of a new 'standard English/ which originated in a different part of the country. But we are not entirely dependent on West Saxon literature for our knowledge of the language of Anglo-Saxon times.

In literature very little continuity is traceable. Secular literature in its more cultivated forms perished doubtless with the dispossession of the English upper classes after the Norman Conquest, though some traces seem to have survived for a while in popular poetry. For literature of entertainment French was now in regular use among the educated classes. In chronicles, which were written in religious houses, the use of English lasted somewhat longer—at Peterborough down to 1154, wjien the language had already considerably changed. But in the course of the twelfth century Latin became universal for historical purposes, apart from some verse chronicles in French. Religious literature — especially sermons — had perhaps the longest life, and it is thought that through them a thread of continuity may be traced between Anglo-Saxon and later prose. But it may be doubted whether any Anglo-Saxon texts were read after *e.* 1200, except legal documents, such as title-deeds and wills, which were of practical value for their possessors.

Unwritten English literature, consisting of songs and sagas, or prose stories, of a popular character, continued to live on among the poorer classes. Owing presumably to this cause the native English nietre appears occasionally in written poems; and in the fourteenth century we find it again in regular use in certain districts, though in a much modified form. But here again foreign influence, with (e.g.) rhyme

instead of alliteration, proved too strong. It had made its appearance before the Conquest; and in the subsequent period it soon became dominant in most parts of the country. Even in unwritten poetry the native form was displaced by the ballad. Traces of alliteration and of Anglo-Saxon diction occur in the earliest ballads; but they are hardly more than sporadic.

In political and social history the continuity was infinitely greater and more important. The Norman Conquest did not destroy the framework of government, though it displaced the personnel, while the social and economic changes, though drastic enough in some respects, especially in relation to the upper classes, did not vitally affect the conditions of life in general. The significance of this continuity is liable to be overlooked owing to the fact that historians are accustomed to treat the Anglo-Saxon period far more briefly and in less detail than later periods.

One or two examples must suffice. The political map of England, as it existed a century ago—and as it still exists, in many respects—was a legacy from the Anglo-Saxon period. South of the Humber no new counties have been formed, except Monmouthshire and possibly Rutland. The hundreds, which existed until last century, had in most counties undergone little change. Most of the parishes of to-day, except in urban and industrial districts, probably date from the Anglo-Saxon period. Very often they can be shown to have preserved the same boundaries. Even the towns which existed before the industrial revolution can usually be traced back to the same period.

A like continuity may be observed in the Church.

Only two new dioceses were formed between the Conquest and the Reformation. Many new monastic orders were introduced from abroad, and numerous religious houses founded during the Middle Ages; but the diocesan and parochial structure remained practically unaffected. And there can be little doubt that as a rule the parish churches of our villages occupy their original sites. Very often indeed, parts of tlie present building—most frequently the tower—date from the Anglo-Saxon period. The chancels were usually rebuilt and enlarged during the Middle Ages; but numerous Anglo-Saxon naves still survive, though many were demolished last century.

The system or systems of agriculture practised in the Anglo-Saxon period continued in use for several centuries after the Norman Conquest, and formed the basis of the surface measures (land-measures)—the acre and rood—and of the measures of length—the furlong, chain ('acre-breadth*) and rod—by which we still reckon. The same continuity may be seen in our system of weights—the pound, ounce and penny-weight—with which the history of our money is closely bound up. We still reckon in pounds, shillings and pence, as in the Anglo-Saxon, period. It is true that the value of the shilling was changed at the Norman Conquest; but the relation of the penny to the, pound remains unaltered. The penny retained its Anglo-Saxon standard, i.e. the pennyweight, for some three centuries after the Conquest—viz., until the re-introduction (under Edward III) of a gold coinage, which had been discarded at the Conquest.

The history of communications is more difficult to trace «in many parts of the country. But it is at

least probable that the great majority of our roads, both high toads and local roads, except in urban districts, have been in use since the Anglo-Saxon periods. Many roads of the past of course now survive only as green lanes. For overseas trade our information is rather meagre; but there were English merchants in France in the eighth century. London was an important port and mart even in the seventh century, and perhaps almost without a break from Roman times.

Anglo-Saxon art—in architecture, sculpture, painting, etc.—was closely bound up with the Church, and consequently did not suffer the untimely fate which befell the secular literature. The changes which took place in the following centuries were such as affected western Europe generally. They would doubtless have found their way to this country even if there had been no Conquest, though it may well be that their operation here was accelerated thereby.

What has been said above will, jt is hoped, show the importance of the Anglo-Saxon period for the study of later times, and this not only for the linguistic specialist, but for all who are interested in our social and political history. It was the formative period of our national culture—a culture which in all its activities, except literature, has been maintained by an unbroken tradition down to our own days, however much affected from time to time by new influences.

But if we admit this, we must go a step further. A period which was so important for later times must deserve study in itself. And here we come **to the great defect** in our historical education. **In our** histories **the** Anglo-Saxon period is **either ignored or**

at least treated on a different scale from the succeeding periods. The three centuries which follow the Norman Conquest are commonly allotted many times more space than the six centuries, or more, of the Anglo-Saxon period. As a result this period is known only to a limited number of specialists. The ordinary educated person knows nothing of it, except a few stories of late date and doubtful authenticity.

It is a strange fact that our historians should prefer to dwell on the age of national humiliation—an age when our country was ruled by foreign kings and nobles, who commonly knew little or no English. We owe to them, it is true, a large number of splendid churches, as well as the picturesque ruins of many of their castles. They built on a grand scale, for they were very wealthy; but their wealth was extorted from our people. Apart from their architectural achievements, we have little to thank them for. By their wars both in these islands and on the Continent, and by their quarrels among themselves, they brought great hardships upon this country.

In explanation of this curious historical perspective it may perhaps be remarked that the records of the age of foreign domination are usually of a more personal character, and consequently more easy to follow, than those of the earlier period. But the true explanation is without doubt, partly, that our histories, are governed by a conservative tradition, dating from a time when the upper classes claimed a Norman Origin, and when the English were regarded as a subject population, and partly that the records for the earlier period are largely in Anglo-Saxon. When

English recovered its position as a medium of education, Anglo-Saxon records had ceased to be intelligible, and the great majority even of the personal names had become unfamiliar. The past was known only through a Norman-French tradition. In more recent times, since a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon again became accessible, historians have been deterred from making use of it by a form of intellectual inertia—the feeling that Latin and French are the only languages of those ages which the historian need trouble to study.

To us nowadays the exotic civilisation of the Norman and Plantagenet periods is even less comprehensible and more remote from our own than that of Anglo-Saxon times. But the conservatism and inadaptability of our educational tradition has been sufficient to keep the former in the foreground, in spite of its inferior value. Account is, of course, also to be taken of the fact that since the Renaissance the activities of English learning have been directed more to the study of Classical antiquity than to that of our own. Even now there are far more people interested in the early history of Rome and Athens than in that of London.

An objection has sometimes been raised to the study of Anglo-Saxon history on the ground of it9 complexity, or lack of unity; whereas later English history, like Roman history, flows in one channel, in Anglo-Saxon times each of the various kingdoms runs a more or less independent course. But this is true only of the earlier phases of the period; and even there die complexity is hardly so great as in ancient **Greece.**

In order to form any grasp of the Anglo-Saxon period it is necessary in the first place to appreciate its length—which was rather more than six centuries. Reckoning back from the present time this would bring us to the reign of Edward I I ; at Rome, reckoning back from the beginning of the Christian era, it would carry us back far into the time of the kings. It would be absurd of course to expect anything like uniformity throughout so long a period, even in the most conservative of communities; and in point of fact there is no difficulty in distinguishing within the Anglo-Saxon period itself certain shorter periods or phases, each of which has a unity of its own.

The most convenient divisions are, firstly, between 'pre-historic' and 'historic' times and, secondly, between the times of the 'Heptarchy' and those of the (unified) English kingdom. Historical records of a more or less trustworthy character begin with the arrival of Augustine's mission in 597, or at all events not much earlier. The records which we have of persons and events previous to that date are meagre and legendary. From 597 onwards we have continuous records, though they are sometimes scanty for certain parts of the country. The historical period itself may most conveniently be divided at *. 883-6, when Alfred the Great was recognised as king by all the English. The other kingdoms had perished in the disasters which followed the great Danish invasion of 866.

To the majority of readers the 'Heptarchic' phase is probably the most interesting part of Anglo-Saxon times—especially the period between 597 and 731, which is covered by Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History.[1]

This work by its fullness of detail enables us to a certain extent to form an idea of some of the leading personalities of the time, especially, though not exclusively, in the ecclesiastical world; and the impression which it gives of English life in general is, on the whole, attractive. Warfare was of frequent occurrence; but it was not the normal condition of life. Evidence for much intellectual activity is to be found both in the extensive Latin literature noticed on p. 9 f., and also in English poetry both religious and secular. Poetry and music seem to have been much cultivated, even among the poorer classes. The best sculpture also is believed to date from the seventh and eighth centuries, while good examples of both architecture and painting survive, though they are not numerous.

The map of England, as we have it, largely took shape during the Heptarchic period. The southern counties probably date from the seventh century, though two of tfyem, Kent and Sussex, were at that time independent kingdoms, while most of the others were divisions of Wessex. In the whole country there seem originally to have been about a dozen English kingdoms; but these were gradually reduced to four, which survived until the Great Invasion. After the establishment of Christianity the dioceses at first usually coincided with the kingdoms, though before long some of them were subdivided. Considerable changes took place during the period 866-950; but these were merely modifications of the original scheme, chiefly due to the disasters which followed die Great Invasion. Canterbury acquired its primacy because at the time when the Church **was**

established, in 597, it was the political capital; and it always retained this position, although Kent soon lost its political power. The archbishopric of York was due to a somewhat similar cause; but the circumstances here were rather more complicated. It is very likely also that the parochial system everywhere dates largely from the same period, though in many parts of the country definite evidence for this would not be easy to find.

There can be little doubt that, in spite of its wars, England was a prosperous country under the Heptarchy. In order to appreciate the conditions fully, it is necessary of course to take into account not only the literary records, which are mainly Latin, but also the letters and legal documents (also chiefly Latin) and the evidence of the monuments and other antiquities. Relations with the Continent and with the northern and western parts of the British Isles were widely developed; but during the greater part of the time England was ahead of the rest of western Europe in both learning and art. The English had received Christianity largely from the Irish Church, especially at Iona, and this fact led to more intimate relations between the different parts of the British Isles than had existed previously, or than were to be known for many centuries later. The Northumbrian kings Oswio and Ecgfrith indeed, tried to conquer the whole of Scotland—the greater part of the south was already English—but these attempts ended in disaster.

It is commonly believed that a time of decadence set in towards the end of the Heptarchic period. Latin learning certainly declined; but this was largely

due to the increasing use of English for literary and educational purposes. It is also true that, owing to the revival of learning on the Continent—the 'Caroline Renaissance'—England no longer occupied a leading position in Western civilisation. More than this can hardly be said with confidence. But from about 850, or rather earlier, the whole country suffered greatly from the raids of Scandinavian pirates, and in the few years after 866 the north-eastern half of it was utterly ruined by the Great Invasion.

The work of recovery and reconstruction was carried out by Alfred the Great, who united under him all the unconquered parts of the country, and completed by his son and grandsons. Eadred at his death in 955 was sole king over all our present England, together with much of the south of Scotland. Our political map of Central England dates from this period; and many of the county towns there are mentioned now for the first time. Both in towns and elsewhere we can trace the growth of collective responsibility. It was a time of great achievements, and ought to be no less interesting than the Heptarchic period. Unfortunately our historical authorities^—which are mainly Anglo-Saxon—are hardly detailed enough to give us a clear impression of the leading personalities, except Alfred and (much later) St. Dunstan. Legal documents, however, which are numerous, throw a good deal of light on the life of the times, especially among the upper classes. The same may be said of the painting, which is now much more naturalistic and vivacious, though the eflpct is sometimes spoilt by excess of floral decoration. The sculpture on the other hand, is inferior to that of the

earlier period. The same is perhaps true of the architecture, though it is impossible to speak with confidence, since none of the cathedrals or larger churches have been preserved. Some magnificent towers survive from the tenth century.

The eleventh century presents a* sad contrast to the tenth. Misgovernment, combined with dissensions among the great nobles, paved the way for foreign invaders. It is clear enough from the historical records, which are now much fuller, that there was no lack either of intellectual activity or of national feeling; criticisms and protests against the actions of the rulers are frequent. On one occasion, indeed, in 1014, something in the nature of constitutional government was actually secured, but only for the moment. Further development was prevented by the Danish and Norman conquests.

Some compensation for the lack of personal interest in the later Anglo-Saxon period may be found in Norse records. The sagas, as we have them, date of course from much later times; but they preserve a good deal of old tradition. Stories relating to the times of the Great Invasion are almost wholly legendary; but from the time of Aethelstan onwards, in spite of much confusion and the presence of a large imaginative element, the sagas are always worth consideration. One of the most interesting stories is that of Egill Skallagrimsson's adventures at York, which seems to refer to the year 936. For the eleventh century much information, supplementing and explaining the English records, may be obtained from the sagas, as well as from contemporary Norse poems.

We have left the consideration of the 'prehistoric*

period to the last, because the interest which it possesses—and to many people it is the most interesting of all—differs from that of the later periods. It is the fascination which attaches to exploration and discovery of the unknown. Until recently we were practically dependent for our knowledge of this period upon a few entries of uncertain value in the Saxon Chronicle, supplemented by inferences from later times. In recent years, however, so much progress has been made in the excavation and study of heathen cemeteries that it is now possible to trace and date the expansion of the earliest English kingdoms with a considerable measure of confidence. There can be no doubt that the continuation of this work will in the future add materially to our knowledge. We may refer to the funeral ship discovered less than two years ago at Sutton Hoo.

It may be added here that the study of the 'pre-historic* period must not be limited to this country. The excavation of cemeteries and other sites in Denmark and north Germany has shown that a similar civilisation prevailed there during the same period; indeed, many of the objects are identical. Moreover, heroic poems and other records derived therefrom, both English and Scandinavian, preserve good traditions of English kings who reigned in Angel—to the north of Sleswick—before the invasion of Britain. From these kings the Mercian kings of **the** Heptarchic period traced their descent; **and there** is no **need to** doubt that the main body of **the invaders were** led by members of the same family. **The traditions carry** English history back at least **to the early part of the fourth** century.

From the period of the Invasion and the following century, heroic poetry likewise preserves good and fairly detailed accounts of other Teutonic kings, especially those of the Danes, and descriptions of the life lived at their courts. These descriptions may be compared with the records of Teutonic kings left by Greek and Roman authors of the same period, and with the objects found in graves and on other sites dating from those times. As a result we may obtain a fairly full picture of the civilisation of the 'Heroic Age'—the age when Teutonic rule was established not only in this country, but throughout the greater part of the Roman Empire. In order to get this picture, I would repeat, evidence of all kinds must be taken into account; but on the literary side the Anglo-Saxon heroic poems are by far the best and earliest source.

It is to be borne in mind of course that our nation is of composite origin. The invaders became the dominent element in the country; and it is from them **that** we have inherited our language—the earliest records of which are to be found in inscriptions from Angel and the neighbouring regions. But it is **not very likely that** the population itself is predominantly of English descent in any part of the country; in the west and north the proportion of English blood is probably quite low. Unfortunately our knowledge of **the** Britons in the fifth century is very limited. No contemporary records have been preserved from **that time;** and being Christians they did **not, like the English, bury their** goods with **the dead. How much of the** civilisation of **the Roman period did they retain? In the sixth century the northern Britons had a civilisation not unlike that of the English, so far as**

we can judge from the remains of their heroic poetry. By the seventh century the two peoples must have amalgamated to a large extent. Many Englishmen of that time, including the first known English poet (Caedmon) bear Welsh names. But we do not know how the fusion came about. This is one of the outstanding problems of our early history.

From what has been said above it will be clear, I hope, that the Anglo-Saxon period is rich in interesting materials for study. It is rich also in interesting problems which await solution. One or two of these have been mentioned; but there are many more. What sort of education, what sort of intellectual life had the English before they adopted Christianity and Roman learning? Materials for studying such questions are not lacking; but they must be approached in connection with the Norse evidence, which is generally fuller. The Britons also had an intellectual life which was largely independent of Roman influence; and this again should be studied in connection with the English, as well as with Irish, evidence. By such studies we may hope to acquire a knowledge of the native intellectual life of the Teutonic and Celtic peoples, in general, as a whole. And similar results may be obtained by a comparative study of the native laws and **the** social organisation of these peoples.

The value of such studies is by no means limited to **the** increased knowledge which they afford us of the ancient peoples of the North. They serve also **to throw** much light on the poetry and intellectual **activities,** the laws and social life of **other peoples, both ancient and** modern. They afford **interesting and instructive parallels** to **the early civilisations and**

literatures of the Greeks, the Hebrews and the Indians; and at the same time they can contribute very largely to the understanding of the life and the intellectual activities of the backward peoples of to-day, both in Africa and elsewhere.

I must repeat that, in order to appreciate the interest of the Anglo-Saxon period to the full, all its activities^-intellectual, social, political, artistic—should be taken into account. If this is done, it will be found that very few countries in the world—certainly none in the northern half of Europe—have a past which can compare in length and varied interest with that of our own country.

CHAPTER III.

KINDRED AND CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES

WE have seen that Anglo-Saxon studies have a value for the light which they throw on later times, as well as for their own sake. On the other hand the help which these studies themselves can derive from the evidence of later times is far less substantial.

For the history of the English language, as we noted above, a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon is essential. But the help which the later history of the language can contribute to the study of Anglo-Saxon is, in general, slight. Indeed, the beginner is more likely to be misled than helped, owing to the numerous changes which have taken place, especially in the meaning of words. To the same cause must be attributed the low standard of translation—often definitely erroneous—which is still far too widely prevalent. Occasionally a rare word or form may be interpreted by evidence from later times; and in very late texts, dating from Norman times, such evidence may be of appreciable value. The names of places may also frequently be identified by the help of later records. But, in general, a knowledge of the other early Teutonic languages—Norse, German and Gothic —is incomparably more important for the study of Anglo-Saxon.

Latin and French works of the twelfth century preserve a number of stories, mostly of a legendary character, relating to the Anglo-Saxon period, and apparently derived from oral tradition. Apart from

these, the value of later literature for our studies is negligible. But legal records and statistics dating from later times often supply information which is of value for our period. This is especially the case with records of local customs, regulations and dues, showing features in local government, agriculture and trade, which seem to have had their origin in the Anglo-Saxon period, though we may not be able to find any reference to them in early times. The later evidence is of importance chiefly for the north of England and the northern and eastern midlands, where the Scandinavian invasion of 866 brought about great social and political changes and involved the wholesale destruction of early records.

On the whole, however, the help which Anglo-Saxon studies can derive from later English records is slight in comparison with what may be gained from contemporary foreign records. From the sixth century onwards the English were in constant communication with the more advanced civilisation of the south —France, Italy and the Mediterranean world. To it they were indebted for their ecclesiastical organisation, their written literature, their artistic achievements in architecture, sculpture and painting, and for many other accessories of civilisation, which brought about a general improvement in their standard of life. At certain times and in some respects, it is true, they surpassed their teachers; but that does not affect the fact of their indebtedness. It is in the records and monuments of this late Roman civilisation, especially the literature and art of the fifth and sixth centuries, that we shall find the chief sources and models of Anglo-Saxon literature and art in Christian times.

Influence from the same quarter—characterised by new fashions in art from time to time—persists throughout the Anglo-Saxon period,

The literature to which Anglo-Saxon literature is so much indebted was almost wholly Latin, whatever its ultimate origin. In one case, indeed, the immediate source was a north German poem; but this seems to be an isolated occurrence. With few exceptions the remains of German literature which survive from this period consist of translations and paraphrases from the Bible and other Latin religious works. For our knowledge of the people themselves and their civilisation we are dependent upon Latin works—histories, laws and records of various kinds—which supply us with fairly abundant information, not only for the Germans, but also for the Goths and other Teutonic peoples of the Continent. The Latin evidence relating to these peoples goes back, in one form or another, far beyond the time of Christian influence—indeed, to the beginning of our era—and is of great value for our studies.

Though the vernacular literatures of the Continent contain very little original matter, they are important for the study of language. This is true not only of the German, but also of the Gothic texts, which consist wholly of translations. A comparative study of these languages, together with Norse, **enables** us **to realise the** structure of the Anglo-Saxon language **and** to appreciate its relationship not only with **these languages**—with which it must have been **virtually identical at no very distant date—but also with Celtic, Latin, Greek, Indian,** Slavonic **and** other **languages of the Indo-European family. For such linguistic study**

it is essential to take account of the Teutonic names which occur in early Latin and Greek works and of the earliest Runic inscriptions, which contain the oldest inflexional forms of the Teutonic languages.

Apart from the study of language in the strict sense, the earliest German poems, like early Norse poems, have a value for tracing the history of metre and diction in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Here again the numerous common elements seem to point to a genetic relationship of great antiquity.

Far more important, however, for the knowledge of our subject is the study of early Norse or, we should perhaps rather say, early Scandinavian studies in general. On the linguistic side the importance of these studies is due partly to the great wealth of material, and partly to the fact that, owing to the abundance of epigraphic evidence—a line of study neglected by English scholars—it is possible to trace the history of the language in unbroken continuity back to the earliest times. We may note also that Scandinavian languages came to be widely spoken in this country during the ninth and following centuries, and that they deeply influenced the English language.

To the majority of students, however, it is a matter of more interest that early Norse literature is the most independent and original that Europe has produced since the times of ancient Greece. Both the poetry and the prose are essentially oral. In the former the most striking feature is its variety, both in form and matter. In prose the oral narrative, or 'saga' is drawn straight from life, and surpasses that of all other peoples in its power of vivid presentation—whether in exciting situations or in ordinary routine conditions

—and above all in the characterisation—the individuality—of the personnel. Very often the scene is laid in this country; and the sagas go far towards making good that lack of personality which one cannot but feel to be the great defect of Anglo-Saxon literature.

The sagas of realistic and 'modern* character, of which we have been speaking, are concerned with Icelandic families and relate to the tenth and early eleventh centuries. There are many other sagas, however, as well as poems, which relate to more remote times. Some of these stories—which are preserved also by medieval Danish (Latin) historians—are concerned with the Heroic Age, and with persons who figure in 'Beowulf and other Anglo-Saxon heroic poems. Both sagas and poems often contain much interesting information about the far past and the customs and beliefs of heathen times. Others again relate stories of the gods, or expound the native (heathen) philosophy. The earliest laws too are of an unusually detailed and archaic character. It is by means of this very varied and extensive literature that we can best form an impression of the social and intellectual life of the English before they became affected by Roman influence—an impression far more comprehensive than we can form from native sources, owing to the defects of our early records.

But it is not only for the earliest period of English civilisation—before the acceptance of Christianity—that Scandinavian evidence is of value. In the ninth century large portions of England, as also of Ireland **and** the Scottish islands, were conquered and settled by Scandinavian invaders. In England the invaders **were not able to** maintain their independence for very

long; yet the conquest produced lasting effect upon the language and the customs and institutions of the north-eastern half of the country, more especially in the development of town life and the growth of trade. The origin and character of the innovations which took place at this time can be appreciated only by a study of Scandinavian records. In the tenth century it is impossible even to trace the course of political history in the north of England without the help of Norse and Irish authorities. In the eleventh century England belonged for a short time definitely to the Scandinavian world.

We have now to consider certain studies, the value of which for our subject is not yet sufficiently recognised. No one would be so foolish as to deny the importance of late Roman influence on the history of Anglo-Saxon art and literature. But Roman influence was no new phenomenon of Augustine's time. It had affected the English from the day when they first set foot in this country. The historians of last century thought of the English as settling in a practically deserted land: they learned nothing from the previous inhabitants, and avoided their ruined cities. But this was a serious mistake. When we meet with English kings for the first time we find them residing in Roman cities—Canterbury, London and York—and the excavation of early cremation cemeteries, e.g. at York, Caistor St. Edmund (Norwich) and Gunbridge, has shown that the invaders settled in great force in or about such cities from the beginning. There can be no question that in 'Beowulf' the poet is representing normal English conditions when he describes the Danish king and his court as 'inhabitants

of a Roman city,' and when he makes visitors arrive at the palace by a paved Roman road. Such roads themselves were a heritage of perhaps even greater value than the cities. They were the main arteries of English life from the beginning; and the importance attached to them may be estimated by the care with which they were fortified at certain points. We may refer especially to the extensive dykes which guard the eastern approaches to the road from Denver to Peterborough. There can be no doubt that the invaders now for the first time became acquainted with many other appurtenances of civilisation—e.g. improvements in clothing and housing, the knowledge of horticulture and of an improved agriculture, the use of the water-mill—and that their standard of living was materially raised thereby. They must indeed have been influenced at every turn by the civilisation which they found in this country. If we ignore it, we can obtain only an inadequate and one-sided impression of the period.

Even in pre-Roman times we may find at least an interesting analogy, if not also a historical connection, with our period. The kingdoms which existed in Britain before the Roman conquest retained some measure of autonomy under Roman rule, though they now had a republican form of government; the kings themselves disappeared. After the collapse of the Roman power in the fifth century we again find kings in several of these states; and in the next century the whole country is divided into a number of kingdoms—British in the west, English in the east—many of which seems to coincide more or less with the kingdoms of pre-Roman times. This coincidence is doubtless due

in part to geography; but examples of historical continuity are almost certain in the west, and at least possible in the east. At all events it is of interest to compare the political conditions of Cymbeline's time with those of the Heptarchy; and the same may be said with regard to the material culture of the two periods.

The relations between the English and the Britons in the Anglo-Saxon period have given rise to much controversy. The historians of last century tended to the view that the invaders made more or less of a 'clean sweep' of the inhabitants in the greater part of the country and re-populated it from their own stock. The chief argument in favour of this view is linguistic: the disappearance of the Welsh language and the slightness of the effects it has left in English. But the argument is inconclusive; the same phenomenon may be seen in large parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, where there has been no appreciable displacement of population. In more recent times there has been a general reaction against this view in its extreme form. But it has been revived to a certain extent under the influence of a theory that the English invaders introduced a new system of agriculture. This theory is still under discussion; but the evidence now available indicates that the new agriculture was introduced long before the invasion, and probably even before the Roman Conquest, though the older and more primitive type persisted in many districts—indeed, down to Norman times. And it is certainly difficult to think of the young warriors, of whom the English armies doubtless consisted, as keen agriculturists. It is perhaps even more difficult to believe

that their numbers were sufficient to populate the country. The evidence of heathen cemeteries suggests that only the best lands were at first occupied by the invaders. Large tracts of poorer land may have remained in the occupation of Britons, who gradually became Anglicised in the course of time. It may be noted that the name of the first known English poet (Caedmon) is Welsh, while that of the first important English bishop and saint (St. Chad) is of Welsh derivation. There are reasons for suspecting that the royal house of Wessex was of British origin.

At the beginning of the seventh century the Britons still held nearly half of the whole country between the English Channel and the Forth; but the English were encroaching upon their territories, especially in the north. The relations between the two peoples were by no means uniformly hostile, though after the conversion of the English they were embittered by ecclesiastical disputes of a deplorable character. This period—more properly the late sixth and early seventh centuries—is fairly well known to us from Welsh heroic poetry, from this it is clear that the life of the two peoples, at least that of the royal families, had now come to be very similar. In form these poems differ greatly from Anglo-Saxon poetry; there is no narrative. But the courts which they describe might well be those of English kings in the seventh century; and the same is true of the heroic ideals which they represent. In early Welsh and Anglo-Saxon gnomic poetry, which belongs to a different social milieu, even more striking resemblances are to be found; but this again applies only to the substance, not the form, of the poems.

This early poetry is difficult and often badly preserved. But it is of great interest owing to its variety and originality; much of it seems to be quite independent of foreign influence. The neglect with which it has been treated in the past is a standing reproach to our country, though a good deal of progress has been made in recent years, especially by Welsh scholars. Apart from the poetry, Wales has preserved a large amount of information relating to the same period in the form of genealogies, short chronicles and condensed notices of princely persons grouped in the form of 'Triads,' which are apparently derived from lost heroic stories. Reminiscences of heroic tradition are also to be found in the medieval romances centred in King Arthur. Lastly, there are a large number of ecclesiastical records, including not only traditional 'Lives' of saints, in some of which Arthur himself appears, but also better authenticated documents, of which the earliest seem to be as old as his time. Altogether therefore the wealth of material is very considerable; and its interest extends far beyond Wales. Most of the heroic poems and stories relate to Scotland or the north of England. On the other hand our knowledge of the material culture of the Britons is still very defective. Their sculptured monuments, however, are somewhat similar to those of the English and contemporary with them. Many of them bear inscriptions; but there are also some inscribed monuments of much earlier date.

Scotland in the Anglo-Saxon period was occupied by four different peoples. The south was divided between the Britons and the English, while the country

north of the Forth, except Argyll, belonged to the Picts. Argyll^ with Bute, formed the kingdom of the Scots (i.e. Irish) of Dalriada, who had come in the fifth century from Dalriada in Co. Antrim. In 844, Kenneth mac Alpin, king of the Scots, succeeded to the Pictish throne. The two kingdoms then became united, and before long the Pictish name went out of use.

It is probable that a good deal of early Welsh poetry comes from the northern Britons; but, apart from this, hardly anything of their records has survived, although the kingdom of Strathclyde lasted until the eleventh century. Pictish records are represented by one short chronicle, which down to the time of Kenneth mac Alpin is little more than a list of kings. For the kingdom of Dalriada in its earlier days we have much fuller information from Adamnan's 'Life of St. Columba' and from Irish annals and other records. But from the eighth century to the eleventh our knowledge of Scottish history everywhere is very meagre. It is remarkable that no early traditions have been preserved. On the other hand, we have a good deal of monumental sculpture, which is, in general, similar to that of England and Wales, though Pictish monuments have also a number of peculiar and quite distinctive designs. Otherwise the archaeology of this period is still not at all well known.

The monastery of Iona, founded about 565 by St. Columba, was the headquarters of a large number of churches in Ireland, as well as of the churches of the Picts. From this monastery, about 635, came St. Aidan, whose mission led to the conversion or reconversion of the greater part of England. It is commonly believed that the English owed not only

their Christianity, but also their knowledge of writing to this movement. For the form of writing—I mean of course Roman, not Runic, writing—which came into use among them was not the form current on the Continent in Augustine's time, but an antiquated form, which had been introduced into this country long before, and was still employed by the Britons and the Irish. But we have no explicit evidence that the English acquired it from the Iona missionaries or any other Irish source; and account must be taken of the possibility that they may have learned it from the Britons. The British church was still flourishing in the western midlands and in the north and south-west of England; and there are reasons for doubting whether it had entirely disappeared even in the regions conquered by the English. Bede, it is true, states definitely that the Britons never tried to convert the English; but he was under the influence of an ecclesiastical tradition which was prejudiced against the British Church. The rapidity with which the conversion of the English was effected suggests at least that Christianity was not wholly unfamiliar to them.

Whatever may be the truth as to the extent of the debt owed by the English to Iona, there is no doubt as to the zeal for learning shown by the Irish Church in the seventh century. Ireland had been converted in the fifth century under St, Patrick—to some extent indeed even earlier—but its religious life received a great stimulus from the monasteries founded in the sixth century. The zeal for learning which developed in the seventh century led to a similar devotion to the ecclesiastical arts—first painting, and then monumental

sculpture. Both of these were probably derived from England; but m the ninth and tenth centuries the Irish 'wheel-head' crosses came to surpass contemporary English sculpture; and as a rule they are much better preserved. It may be remarked that the connection between English and Irish art did not cease with the breach between the churches in 664. We hear occasionally of Irish artists in England long after that time.

Ireland has another claim for consideration here, namely on account of its intellectual activities and achievements in the secular world. In this case there is no direct connection with this country, as there is in religion and in art. But the Irish material is so abundant and so remarkable that no one who is interested in such subjects should overlook it. In the first place Ireland has preserved a larger number of heroic stories (sagas) relating to the far past than any other nation, in addition to stories of the gods and much poetry of varied character. Some readers, it is true, are repelled by the crude and grotesque incidents which occur not seldom in the stories; but in general, their archaic and barbaric features are themselves of great interest for comparative study. More remarkable, however, than the sagas themselves is the native system of learning which enabled Irish scholars to construct from them a most comprehensive and detailed history of their country. This system was in part of purely native origin, and similar in principle to the native learning found in Wales, Scandinavia and elsewhere. But this native learning came to be combined, apparently in the seventh century, with ecclesiastical learning, and especially with the learning

of the ecclesiastical chronicles. One result of these activities, which has often caused amusement to modern scholars, was to supplement Eusebius with an ancient history of Ireland, parallel to those of the Greeks and Hebrews, from the most remote times. But the real wonder is that the ancient scholars gained so much success as they did in reconstructing the past. Last century it was the fashion to disparage their efforts, and to assume that all persons and events before St. Patrick's time—perhaps even including the saint himself—were products of myth. Now there is a general tendency to allow historical tradition for the two previous centuries—back to Cormac mac Airt. I think a good deal more will have to be conceded before the question is settled.

It is very probable that the zeal for learning shown in the Irish Church was largely due to the intellectual activities of the past. In the seventh century both the native learning and the Gaelic language were beginning to be committed to writing. It may be too that other characteristics of the Celtic Church, e.g. the love of wild nature shown in the stories of saints, and the 'hermit' poetry which appears somewhat later, may ultimately spring from the same source, though this is not the prevailing view at present.

We have included early Irish secular literature in this chapter, not because we suppose* it to have any historical connection with Anglo-Saxon literature, **but** because of its interest and value for comparative purposes. Many other literatures belonging to peoples in a similar stage of civilisation may **be used** for the same purpose. Thus heroic **narrative poetry** may **be** illustrated by comparison with **early Greek**

and Indian heroic poetry and with the heroic poems of the modern Russians, Yugoslavs and Tatars. Other kinds of poetry—gnomic, descriptive, mantic, etc.—may be illustrated by similar comparisons. The study of comparative literature shows that, iri general, the intellectual activities of peoples tend to follow similar lines. It is specially necessary in a literature like Anglo-Saxon where only a limited amount of material has been preserved; for it brings to light that many features which might be—and often are—regarded as peculiarities of an individual poet are in reality normal characteristics of a certain class of poetry. We are speaking, of course, only of the native elements in a literature. Borrowed elements, like the very large ecclesiastical element in Anglo-Saxon, are governed in the main by the sources from which they are derived.

It is not only in literature that comparative study will be found helpful and illuminating. In law, just as in literature, we may distinguish two elements, native and Roman, the latter of which is constantly encroaching upon the former throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. We may instance the tenure of land and the treatment of crime. For the native element in law comparative study is as important as in literature. IUuminating parallels are commonly to be found, not only among the early Teutonic and Celtic peoples, where a historical connection is probable or possible, but also among ancient peoples and backward modern peoples in many parts of the world. In various other subjects, such as social life and industries, comparative study will be found equally helpful.

To summarise briefly what has been said above—the value and interest of Anglo-Saxon studies may be increased very greatly by combining them with the study of contemporary history and literature, whether Continental (late Roman), Celtic or Scandinavian, or with that of the earlier history and antiquities of this country, or again with a comparative study of life or literature among peoples in a similar stage of civilisation. My own experience as a teacher has shown that among these the subjects which usually appeal most to young students are either the earlier history and antiquities of the country or the Celtic and Scandinavian studies; and in the latter case it is to be remembered that the Celtic languages present much greater difficulties than the Scandinavian. All these subjects, however, will contribute in one way or another to enhance the value of our studies.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUTURE OF ANGLO-SAXON STUDIES

THE revival of Anglo-Saxon studies took place about the middle of the sixteenth century and was inspired in the first instance by the theological and legal controversies which were then current. The chief leaders in the movement were Archbishop Matthew Parker, J. Joscelin, his secretary, L. Noel, Dean of Lichfield, and W. Lambarde. Their most important publications were, first (in 1566-7), a small collection of Anglo-Saxon sermons and other religious documents, with translations, by Parker; next, an edition ('Arctiaionomia') of the Anglo-Saxon Laws, by Lambarde (1568); and then, an edition of Asser's 'Life of King Alfred,' by Parker, together with text and translation of Alfred's Preface to his translation of the 'Cura Pastoralis' (1574). Among other works published before 1600 we may note Sir H. Savile's edition of Latin chronicles (1596), including that of Aethelweard, and a translation of the * Voyages' of Ohthere and Wulfstan (attributed to Dr. Caius), included in Hakluyt's 'Principal Navigations,' etc. (1589).

Since that time there has never been any very long interval in the flow of publications. It would be beyond the scope of this little book to attempt anything in the nature of a bibliography or history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship; but we may. mention **that about 1640** Sir H. Spelman endowed **a** lectureship in* Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge for a few years. The first **holder** was Abraham Wheiock, Professor of Arabic,

who in 1643 published an edition of both the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon texts of Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History,' together with a text (now lost) of the Saxon Chronicle. Both the Anglo-Saxon texts appeared now for the first time; but the Latin text of Bede had been published as early as 1475 at Strasbourg. In 1750 a permanent endowment for a Lectureship or Professorship at Oxford was bequeathed by R. Rawlinson. It is not clear, however, that the study of Anglo-Saxon was pursued exclusively or even mainly at the Universities.

On the linguistic side the most comprehensive early work was G. Hickes' 'Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus,' which contains grammars of Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, early Norse and early German, together with a number of texts and translations, and a treatise by E. Thwaites on Anglo-Saxon coins. After the publication of this work (1703-5) the output of books on Anglo-Saxon studies tended to increase steadily until it reached its maximum in 1830-50. The chief contributors in these twenty years were J. M. Kemble and B. Thorpe. The former published in six volumes (1839-48) a collection of all known charters of the period, both Latin and Anglo-Saxon, and edited many other Anglo-Saxon texts. He also produced important works on Anglo-Saxon history and archaeology. The latter edited and translated many Anglo-Saxon works, and was active also in Norse studies.

Soon after 1850 a period of decline set in. A cleavage began to take place betwen linguistic and historical interests. The increased activity in historical studies, including constitutional history, in the Universities, especially Oxford, led to a widely extended use of Anglo-Saxon historical and legal works

in translation, without reference to the original texts. On the other hand, scholars who knew the language seem, in general, to have come to regard the historical and legal works as lying outside their province. This is the more remarkable because in the same Universities ancient history has always been regarded as belonging primarily to the sphere of Classical scholars; no one would think of undertaking any serious study in this subject without a knowledge of the primary authorities in the original (Latin or Greek) languages. The two cases are entirely parallel. Yet for more than half-a-century from this time the study of our early laws in the original language was left to foreign scholars.

The last survivor of the previous generation was Joseph Bosworth, who in 1867 bequeathed funds for the establishment of a Professorship at Cambridge. He was a keen philologist, but also took a liberal and comprehensive view of the scope of Anglo-Saxon studies. In the deed of foundation he laid down that it was to be the Professors duty to promote the study of the Anglo-Saxon language and the languages cognate therewith, together with the antiquities and history of the Anglo-Saxons. Bosworth also augmented Rawlinson's foundation at Oxford.

But by this time the outlook of younger scholars had become much more limited. This was a result of the zeal for philology which followed the researches of R. K. Rask and J. Grimm. Many of Grimm's followers specialised in the history of the German language, and not a few in that of the English, while others again devoted themselves to the comparative grammar of attention

paid in Germany to the history of the English language soon influenced this country; and much care and learning were devoted to the subject. The focus of activity, however, was not so much the Anglo-Saxon language as that of the following period. Numerous texts of this period were published—texts which are of little literary or historical interest, but which, as products of an illiterate society, are the more valuable for the study of phonology owing to the absence of a standard orthography. On the other hand the study of Teutonic philology, which is, of course more important for Anglo-Saxon, never really took root in this country. German method was followed much too closely, e.g. in the excessive (dogmatic) use of hypothetical forms, while the evidence of ancient inscriptions was neglected. Moreover, very few of the students and not many of the teachers had more than a superficial knowledge of Greek and Latin,, or any other languages outside the Teutonic family. Consequently the comparative study came to be little more than an exercise of memory and faith. The futility of the study was, of course, greatly increased when Greek disappeared from the compulsory requirements of the Universities; for Latin is a difficult language to use for comparative purposes.

This devotion to philology rendered some help to Anglo-Saxon studies by stimulating the production of accurate texts and by calling attention to the characteristics of different periods and dialects. The comparative philology, so far as it had any influence, threw much light on the structure of the language. But progress in the study of literature, as well as in historical and cultural studies, was retarded for a

considerable time. This was, of course, a passing phase; but owing to an accident it had an unfortunate effect on Anglo-Saxon studies. While they were at the ebb tide, in the 'eighties, the Universities introduced English and other modern languages as subjects for examination in Honours. In each language texts from the earliest and all subsequent periods were set for study; and, at least in Cambridge, attention was paid exclusively to language. In the earliest French and German records, which have no interest other than linguistic, this limitation entailed no hardship; but Anglo-Saxon received the same treatment. Indeed, even the modern periods received much the same treatment at first.

In the last half century the courses for Honours in English have been transformed, with the result that more importance is now attached to 'literature' than to 'language,' though in many Universities students are allowed to specialise in the latter if they wish. Two consequences, however, remain almost everywhere as a legacy from the original scheme. The study of Anglo-Saxon is still bound up with that of (later) English; and it is still pursued more or less on philological lines, in connection with the later history of the language. On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon history and antiquities cannot be taken by students who are taking Anglo-Saxon; the two studies belong to different departments, and are mutually exclusive. For archaeology and art there is no place at all; and the same is true of the subjects noticed in Chapter I I I above, except perhaps the Roman period, which may be taken in a 'Classical' course, unconnected with the history of this country.

Compulsory philology has been a great hindrance to Anglo-Saxon studies. The subject appeals to a very small proportion of the students, according to my experience. They should have the opportunity of taking it, at least as a subject for post-graduate study—for which it is best suited. But it is unreasonable to force it upon every student. It is no more necessary for the study of Anglo-Saxon than it is for that of Latin or Greek or a modern foreign language. A student of Anglo-Saxon will gain no more from the study of its relationship to later English than a Classical student will gain from studying the relationship of Latin to French.

The connection with (later) English studies has led to a very great increase in the number of people who have at least some knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, English literature is now one of the most popular subjects in our Universities; and in most of them Anglo-Saxon is, or has been, a more or less compulsory element in the course. As to the value of this connection for either subject, my own experience has been that, when Anglo-Saxon is compulsory, it is disliked, and the students gain little or nothing from it. On the other hand, when it is optional, the number who take it is very small—not more than one in ten—but these usually rather like it, if philology is eliminated, and most of them gain something thereby. To force it upon a larger number of students is, in my experience, a mere waste of time for both student and teacher. Most of the students regard it as a nuisance.

My concern, however, is with Anglo-Saxon, not with English studies. It is to be borne in mind that—apart from philology—any Anglo-Saxon which is

introduced into an English course **will probably be** of a sbmewnat elementary character. And such subjects as history, antiquities, art or Latin literature can hardly be included.

Some Universities have made more provision for Anglo-Saxon studies by means of an additional course, which is largely devoted to them, and Serves as an (optional) adjunct to the English course. At first these additional courses were wholly concerned with language (philology); but more recently in several Universities they have been framed on broader lines, so as to include other branches of these studies and also some of the auxiliary subjects noticed in Chapter III above. The numbers attending such courses are usually small; but they have done something—in some cases a good deal—to promote our studies, and especially to extend the knowledge of early Norse literature. Some of them, on the other hand, are still burdened with the homilies and doggerel verse of the post-Conquest period.

There are serious objections, however, to any scheme which involves an exclusive or even primary connection of Anglo-Saxon with English studies. The latter do not afford a good training for the former; and in Universities where this connection has ceased it is found that the majority of our best students come from other subjects than English. For Anglo-Saxon studies some inclination for the acquisition of languages and a wider historical outlook are desirable; English studies are too limited in their scope. Indeed, **the two** subjects appeal to different kinds of mind.

It would have been much better if Anglo-Saxon studies had been attached to History, instead of

English. Attention would then have been concentrated upon the most important Anglo-Saxon records—the historical and legal literature. But even this arrangement would not have been wholly satisfactory; for other parts of the literature, especially the poetry, would then probably have been regarded as out of place. A more serious objection is that the historical schools of most of our Universities tend to avoid the Anglo-Saxon period; and consequendy they would doubtless have been unwilling to accept responsibility for studies which, in spite of their historical value, involved acquaintance with a language which is generally unknown to historians.

If Anglo-Saxon studies are to be treated in our Universities as they deserve, they ought to have full scope for their various interests—linguistic, historical, antiquarian, literary—in the same way as Classical studies; and this can be secured only by giving them an independent position, like Classics. By making use of the auxiliary subjects noticed in the preceding chapter our studies will provide a course at least as varied and as satisfying intellectually as a Classical course. A choice of subjects should be allowed; and compulsory subjects should be avoided as far as possible. Provision can be made of course for those who wish to take Anglo-Saxon in connection with English, or any other Honours school, by allowing them to take certain parts of the course. But the first duty of the teaching staff should be to provide for those who are making Anglo-Saxon (with its auxiliary subjects) their chief study. In order that these duties may be effectively carried out it is of course essential that, as in the case of Classics and other subjects, the

organisation and direction of studies should be in the hands of those, especially the teaching staff, who have special knowledge of them. Co-operation with such 'comparative' studies as I have referred to on pp. 35 £, 50 f£, may, of course, be to the advantage of both.

The number of students who will take such a course as this will doubtless be small—at least until the importance of our early history is more generally recognised. At present the only way of getting a large number of students to learn Anglo-Saxon is by making it a more or less compulsory subject in a popular course—e.g. by making it impossible to obtain a degree in English without it. I have had experience of both systems, and have no hesitation in expressing my preference for the one which will secure a few keen students, who choose the course of their own free will, and will in all probability derive real benefit from it.

I know very well that a scheme such as I have outlined is likely to meet with much opposition. The teaching staff may be unanimous in its favour, and the students may be well satisfied and keen; but opposition or interference may come from persons or committees who have no knowledge of Anglo-Saxon studies, but who may think that their own interests may be affected in some way by such a scheme, or that it may possibly be detrimental to the University. An unfortunate feature of University life to-day is that the time and energy which should go to teaching and research has to be spent in committee rooms. A complicated system of regulations and examinations has been built up; and the advancement of learning must be subordinated to administrative considerations.

Any proposal therefore for instituting a new course—unless it can be widely advertised—is likely to meet with much opposition.

In the first place the authorities responsible for English may wish to acquire or retain control over Anglo-Saxon studies, and especially to get possession of any funds which may be attached to them. Popular subjects have a wide mouth. Even when a trust has been defined in such unambiguous terms as that of Bosworth, to which I have referred above, demands have been made for its diversion.

Again, it may perhaps be argued that the University will incur increased expenditure by such a course. This, however, is erroneous. Apart from the Celtic languages, which are desirable, though by no means necessary, adjuncts of such a course, the expense should be no greater than that of one of the additional courses which I have mentioned as now existing in several Universities. It ought to be considerably less than the expense which is involved when Anglo-Saxon is a compulsory subject in an English course. In most Universities-the expense involved by a subject—I am referring, of course, only to 'Arts' subjects—is practically determined by the amount of time which is required for providing instruction in it, whether by lectures or by supervision. In such a course as I have suggested the amount of time will be much less than when Anglo-Saxon is a compulsory subject in a course taken by a large number of students. In the latter case as a rule, nothing is left to the initiative of the students. The lectures take the form of a complete text-book; and every line of the 'specified books' is translated in class. But in a course which is

taken only by a small number of students, who want it for its own sake, very much can—and should—be left to their own reading. Lectures should, in general, be treated as supplementary to this and limited to recommending books or chapters for them to read, to pointing out salient features and to discussing difficult questions. Translation in class is necessary only in the case of works for which no adequate commentary or translation is available. Little or no time is required for supervision, apart from lectures.

The chief objection, however, springs from professional rather than financial considerations. The tendency among University authorities is to estimate the value of a subject according to its popularity, and to advise students to take subjects in which the numbers are large and the teaching highly organised, so that the slacker and more backward students may receive as much attention as the best. The introduction of new subjects therefore, especially those which are not calculated to attract many students, is regarded with disfavour. It is felt to be the duty of the University to provide as much teaching as possible—and thereby to enable as many students as possible to qualify by a degree—in subjects by which they are likely to obtain a living, rather than to extend the field of knowledge by encouraging new subjects.

The value of specialised work is, of course, admitted in certain lines of study which have long been recognised. Thus ample provision is made for studying the early history of Greece and Rome in connection with the original records. But if a request were to be made for similar facilities in studying the early history of our own country;' the University authorities would no

doubt reply that they were not aware that our country had any early > history or records which were worth studying.

Our studies are by no means the only subject affected by this professional outlook. It affects also what is perhaps the most important of all subjects at the present time—the study of the foreign peoples and languages of to-day. The study of modern foreign languages is certainly widespread in our Universities; and in some of them—not all—it has come to include the peoples themselves, their history, present conditions, etc., as well as their languages. But there is far too much uniformity. I doubt if 5 per cent, of the whole number go beyond the three most popular languages—French, German, Spanish—and the number who take Spanish is not large. In some Universities it is possible to take several other languages—in London, many—but few students, I think, avail themselves of the opportunity. At least in residential Universities little is done to encourage the less known languages; scholarships are seldom given except in French and German. The vast majority of the students continue with the languages they have learnt at school.

Such a course has the advantage that it provides a student with a professional qualification which will enable him to obtain a scholastic post when he leaves the University, whereas less known languages would be of at least doubtful value for this purpose. But if we look beyond the requirements of the scholastic profession, the position is less clear. To the country as a whole, one student who knows one of the less familiar languages may be worth ten who know

French. For our knowledge of many languages and peoples we are largely or wholly dependent upon foreign, especially German, information. We have resigned ourselves to a position of inferiority, from which we have to suffer many disadvantages.

The study of our early history is at present not so urgent as that of foreign languages and peoples. But its importance should not be under-rated. It is to be borne in mind that foreign nations attach a much greater value to their early history that we do to ours, and also that the importance of the times to which the Anglo-Saxon period belongs is far more widely appreciated abroad than in this country. Even our own early history is more widely known abroad than here; and many valuable contributions to the study of it have been made by foreign scholars. On the other hand, we lose much credit owing to the ignorance of our publicists. As for early Celtic studies, which are usually regarded as even more futile than Anglo-Saxon, it may be sufficient here to remark that our recent relations with Ireland might perhaps have taken a somewhat different course if Irish learning had found a home here as it has done in Germany.

My own belief is that the policy of sacrificing everything to popularity and professional considerations is short-sighted and mistaken, and that it will have to be modified, possibly before very long. What is now most required in the interests of the country is not the herding of masses of students along familiar lines, some of which are barren and useless enough, but an expansion of knowledge and of inteilectual activity in many new directions. If University authorities are unable to give any lead to

this expansion of knowledge, it is unfortunate. But in any case it must not be left entirely to the Universities.

> In schools for boys and girls, I think, for reasons given on p. 23 ff., that more attention should be paid to the early periods of our history. To some extent also it should include all the peoples of the British Isles. On the other hand, I should not be in favour of introducing Anglo-Saxon into the regular school curriculum. I have had students who had learned Anglo-Saxon at school in this way; and I doubt if they gained much thereby. What can be done with much more advantage, in my opinion, is to encourage those who wish to learn Anglo-Saxon by themselves in their spare time. This is done at present in some boys' schools, and the results, so far as my experience goes, are much more satisfactory. The boy or girl should be shown how a knowledge of the language will help the study of history; and they should be enabled to get advice as to what to read. There are teachers now who, if they cannot give such advice themselves, are willing to take the trouble to ascertain and inform their pupils where it can be got; and this practice might with advantage be much extended.

These remarks, of course, apply to many other subjects and languages, besides Anglo-Saxon. By such means much can be done, without great trouble or expense, to widen the intellectual outlook of young people, by giving them opportunity of access to subjects which cannot well be included in the regular curriculum of a school A great service to the public interest can be rendered by spreading even a slight

knowledge of the less known peoples and languages and of past times. At the same time such study will develop in young people the power of individual initiative and the capacity for working by themselves. When I was at school I taught myself to read German in my spare time, without help or advice of any kind; and I know that many boys now learn languages in the same way. No doubt the number could be greatly increased with a little encouragement. Many young people of course prefer to work on their own. They can make more rapid progress; and commonly they take more interest in subjects which they have mastered by their own efforts. I am aware that these remarks are likely to raise the examination bogey, but am not inclined to be deterred thereby from making them.

Thus far I have been speaking of Anglo-Saxon studies in Universities and schools. But it seems to me a great misfortune that these studies have come to be more or less confined to educational institutions. A century ago, before they were introduced into the curricula of Universities, our studies seem to have been rather widely current among people who were unconnected with such institutions, and to have benefited thereby not a little.

For more than three centuries after their revival under Archbishop Parker our studies owed much to the Church. It is true that some of the ecclesiastics to whom we are indebted were primarily men in academic life; but others were resident parish clergymen, and even bishops. It is unfortunate that this connection seems to have come practically to an end in the last half century—unfortunate for the Church, I

think, as well as for our studies. The Church could hardly exist without study of the past. Why should this study be concerned only with distant lands ? The early history of the Church in these islands is at least as interesting and varied as in any other part of the "Christian world. Moreover, most of our cathedrals and very many of our parish churches have a history which goes back to the Anglo-Saxon period, or even earlier. Very often the buildings themselves or monuments which they contain date from the same period.

Our towns and counties have at least as long a history, in many cases much longer. I doubt if it has been sufficiently realised that in recent years much valuable information relating to their origin and early history has been discovered or rendered accessible. In the first place a large number of documents dating from the Anglo-Saxon period have been published for the first time in translations with excellent commentaries. Then too the progress of excavation has thrown much new light upon the history of our towns in even earlier times. If those who are now responsible for local government could realise how much information is now available, I cannot help thinking that many of them would be interested to know what the towns, the courts and the markets of a thousand or fifteen hundred years ago were like, and how their predecessors in those times carried on duties similar to their own. The possession of such knowledge would probably prevent the needless destruction of many historical landmarks and of interesting links of various kinds with the far past. And there ate, of course, various ways in which our studies could be

encouraged by local authorities who are interested in our early history.

But it is not only to persons in positions of authority that our studies ought to appeal. In the past they have owed much to people in various professions, as well as to leisured students. We may note in particular how much our own early history, as well as that of foreign nations, has been indebted to the works of authors who were bankers by profession. At present the chief contributions to our knowledge are being made by archaeologists; and these are drawn from many different walks in life. And it is clear from the large number of antiquarian societies which exist throughout the country that, apart from excavators, there are still very many people interested in the monuments and records of the past. The low price at which illustrated books of antiquities are published points in the same direction. On a different side much valuable work has been done by the 'English Place-Name Society,' though most of the evidence collected by them comes from later times. But interest on the historical side has waned. In particular, we have to regret that the unofHcial non-academic student of history seems to have largely disappeared. The chief object which our studies should now have in view is the co-ordination of the historical, archaeological and linguistic records. Only when this is done will they acquire that recognition which is their due, and which they have been prevented from attaining hitherto by the narrow-sightedness of the Universities.

There are, of course, numerous people interested in our iiistory and antiquities whose occupations would not permit them to embark upon anything in

the nature of linguistic study. But I feel sure that there are also a not inconsiderable number, both men and women, who have somewhat more leisure, and who might well be willing to undertake something of this kind, if they were not deterred by certain illusions, for which the Universities are responsible. One is that the study of Anglo-Saxon has no bearing upon the history and institutions of our country. On this question enough perhaps has been said above. The other is that Anglo-Saxon is a difficult language to learn.

In point of fact no language is easier to read than Anglo-Saxon. Anyone who has had any linguistic training—anyone who knows some Latin .and a modern foreign language—can easily learn to read ordinary Anglo-Saxon prose in a few days, if he spends an hour each day upon it. Some elementary books contain simple sentences or passages for beginners. If the learner will spend three or four hours on these, or on simple passages from the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospels—which should, of course, be chosen with some care—he should then be able to make out an ordinary prose narrative, at any rate with the help of a translation. My experience with elementary classes is that they can generally make out such narratives in their fourth hour. They must, of course, look out a good many words in the dictionary or glossary, and also at first refer very frequently to the grammar, especially for the forms of verbs; but that is the case in beginning any new language. Proficiency can only be acquired by time. A teacher can be of considerable help by pointing out items In the grammar which are specially worth noting.

But he is by no means indispensable. I myself never received any instruction or attended any lectures in Anglo-Saxon. Syntax seldom causes any difficulty, except in works or passages translated from Latin. The poetry, however, is less easy, and should be left until one has obtained a mastery of the prose. Really satisfactory translations of it require long study.

It has often struck me as strange that historians and archaeologists should not think it worth while to take the trouble to make themselves acquainted with the original texts of works which they quote. Not unfrequently they allow valuable work which they have done to be marred by mistakes in the interpretation of passages—mistakes which a very few hours' study of the language would have enabled them to rectify. I have no doubt that their reluctance to take this trouble is due to a grossly exaggerated idea of the difficulties presented by the language. And this idea itself arises from the amount of time devoted by the Universities to the study of Anglo-Saxon grammar. In many Universities, courses of lectures extending over a whole year or more have to be given on grammatical rules and sound-laws—subjects which are of no interest to most of the students and of no pracrical utility for reading Anglo-Saxon texts. The result is that a home student, who is not hampered by examinations, can acquire a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon in a small fraction of the time which he would require at a University. And at the same time he will be able to give attention to those historical and local connections of his studies which lend human interest to them, and from which he would be debarred by University regulations.

It is very desirable that home students should be able to obtain advice such as I have mentioned in the case of schools. To procure such advice, without much expenditure of time or money, should not be beyond the power of public libraries and museums. This is a matter in which the influence of local authorities might be very helpful. Possibly it might be undertaken sometimes by societies or associations. The chief requisite is a short descriptive list of books which would be found useful. I do not recommend courses of lectures, or any kind of elaborate organisation which would involve considerable expense in administration.

I have been speaking of Anglo-Saxon, but should like to add here that the early Norse language, with all its great store of treasures, is only slightly more difficult, and can easily be learned without the help of a teacher. Anyone who knows Anglo-Saxon will very soon be able to read it. On the other hand, early Irish is extremely difficult, and will tax the powers of the student to the utmost. But if he can afford the time and effort, he will find it well worth while, in view of the richness of the records. Early Welsh also presents much difficulty, though this is largely due to the lack of helpful books—a defect which is now in process of being remedied. My experience has convinced me that there are now many students anxious to explore the fascinating stores of Celtic antiquity, which have been so long neglected in this country through prejudice and inertia.

The principle for which I have been speaking is the extended use of self-help in the study of the past—the

early history and the languages of our islands. But it is by no meaftS only for these studies that the principle is to be recommended. If our country is to maintain its influence and fulfil its responsibilities, its paramount need to-day is an increase in our knowledge of foreign peoples and languages. Through inertia in the past we have allowed other nations to gain an immense lead upon us in this respect. It is only at the Universities, and at a very small number of these, that any but the commonest languages are taught; and the number of students who avail themselves of the opportunity is disappointingly small. Some means must be found for making the study of the less familiar languages and peoples more generally accessible, and without prohibitive expense.

For most of the languages which are of practical importance, in Europe, Asia or Africa, books are now available, though in many cases there are only German books. A student's task in learning them will, of course, differ greatly according to the difficulty of the language and the merits of the books in which it is treated; but I have no doubt that in most of them it is possible to obtain a reading knowledge by self-help, if the books themselves are accessible, and advice as to their use. The diffusion of knowledge gained thereby will be of considerable value to the country. It will at least enlarge our knowledge of many countries and tend to dissipate some popular illusions, e.g. as to the supposed absence of intellectual life among certain peoples, especially in Africa.

Something more might, of course, be attempted for those wlio had learned to read a foreign language, and especially for those who intended to travel or settle

abroad. Arrangements could probably be made for correspondence with a teacher at a University or elsewhere, and eventually with a resident in the foreign country who wished to learn English. An interchange of journals would be desirable. For the spoken language oral instruction would be necessary. It would be out of place here to enter into details; but I think that, at least in large towns, public authorities might find it well worth while to encourage such study by prizes or grants. The expense would not necessarily be great, provided that care was taken to avoid extravagance in the administrative machinery.

The Anglo-Saxon period, as we have seen, will well repay all the study which may be devoted to it. It deserves study, not only for its value in the general history of our country, but also, and more especially, for its own sake—its distinctive and individual culture.

In conclusion, a few words may be said here as to the attitude to new and foreign learning which we find prevailing in that period.

In the eighth century, Latin learning flourished in this country to a greater extent than anywhere else in the world. Bede and Alcuin were the leading scholars of their times. In the ninth century this learning declined. King Alfred, writing toward the end of the century, says in the Preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's 'Cura Pastoralis* (c£ p. 9) that 'people used to come to this country from abroad to get knowledge and instruction; but now we should have to go abroad for it ourselves, if we are to get

any.' Since Latin is now so little known, it is necessary to make'the most important works accessible in English translations. Later in the same Preface the king expresses his surprise that English scholars in the past had not undertaken any such translations of Latin works; but on reflection he concludes that they had never anticipated such negligence or such a shunp in learning as has now come about. It had evidently been their idea that knowledge would increase with the number of languages which were known in the country.

Special attention was paid in Anglo-Saxon times to the study of history. From Bede's time onwards the history of this country was carried back to Caesar's invasion—the earliest known date—and from that point treated continuously through the Roman and subsequent periods.

But it was not only Latin and antiquarian learning that was cultivated. In his translation of Orosius' 'History of the World/ King Alfred recognised that his author's knowledge of the geography of Europe was inadequate and out of date, and supplemented it by a much fuller account of the political geography of Europe, as it was in his own time. To this he appended accounts of two voyages of discovery, which he had received from the explorers themselves. These are of special interest from the ethnological observations which they contain.

The geography itself includes a survey of the distribution of the Teutonic and the Slavonic peoples in the years which immediately preceded the Hungarian invasion. For the distribution/ of the Slavonic peoples it is by far the earliest authority.

These and other passages cannot but suggest a comparison between Alfred's attitude to such knowledge and that of the educational authorities of to-day —a comparison which will perhaps supply the reader with food for interesting reflection.

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