

writings of another Trouvère of the next age—was sent by his father to be educated at Bayeux; and his taste for poetry is said to have been first awakened by the songs of the land of his ancestors. According to Ritson, Richard is never known to have uttered a single English word, unless when he said to the King of Cyprus, "O dole, this is a fole Breton." Many great nobles of this century were utterly ignorant of the English language: even Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, chancellor and prime minister to Richard, I., according to a contemporary letter, did not know a word of English.

## X.

## CHURCH SCHOOLS.—BENEFIT OF CLERGY.

At the close of Richard's reign, about the year 1188, there was founded at Bury St. Edmund's a school for forty poor boys, by Sampson, Abbot of St. Edmund's, a man of great force of character, who had risen from the people to wear a mitre and be a Peer of Parliament; and in his greatness he did not forget his lowly origin, for he is recorded to have said to one suing him for a benefice, "Thy father was master of the schools, and at the time when I was a poor clerk, he granted me freely and in charity an entrance to his school and the means of learning; now I, for the sake of God, do grant to thee what thou dost ask."

The same good work which Abbot Sampson accomplished at Bury was being accomplished throughout the land for several centuries before him, and several centuries after him, so that knowledge became the special inheritance, not of the high-born and the rich, but of those of low estate. It is true that for the most part those who were educated in the chantries and schools attached to cathedrals and monasteries were the recruits whom the Church was preparing for her militant service. But they were taken from the people, and they lived amongst the people, keeping alive in the hearts of the community the humanizing influences of letters and of religion. Few of the laity, rich or poor, could read; but the poor saw their children winning the rewards of learning without favour or affection; and the light of truth, spread from the altar to the meanest hovel, and kept our fathers from barbarism. The old law called *Benefit of Clergy* shows how gradually the ability to read extended to the clergy. In the early times clergymen claimed the privilege of being exempt in certain cases from criminal punishment by secular judges. They appeared in clerical habit, and claimed the *privilegium clericale*. At length, the *ability to read* was considered sufficient to establish the privilege, and all offenders who claimed their "clergy" had to read a passage from the *Psalms*, which came to be humourously called "the neck verse." This was no merely theoretical privilege, for the *ability to read*, absurd as it may appear, saved an offender in the first instance from the full penalty of his crime. In the *Piston Letters* it is recorded that in 1464, Thomas Gurney employed his man to slay "my Lord of Norwich's cousin." They were both tried and convicted of the crime. Thomas Gurney pleaded his clergy, and was admitted to mercy as "clerk convict;" the less guilty servant, being unable to read, was hanged. But the rank of Thomas Gurney gave no assurance that he possessed any knowledge of letters.

## XI.

## RISE OF UNIVERSITIES.

The twelfth century was the age of the institution of what we now call Universities in Europe, which had, however, long before existed as schools, or *studia*. Oxford and Cambridge had undoubtedly been seats of learning long before this time; but there is no evidence that either had at an earlier date become anything more than a great school, or held any assigned rank or privilege above the other great schools of the kingdom.

Since the conquest, Oxford, ill treated by William, and disregarded by his son Rufus, under Beaulerc again became the object of royal favour, and numbers flocked to her academic groves. The predilection of Beaulerc for the muses made him partial to the neighbourhood; and he granted some privileges to the place. In his time, Robert Pulleyn, who had studied in Paris, gave lectures in theology at Oxford; and by his exertions the love of science was greatly revived, and the number of students increased. Here the study of the civil law began at this period. Oxford continued, throughout the reign of Henry II., to follow the line of studies which the fashion of the age recommended; and her pupils were second to none in fortune and fame. Thomas à Becket, who had studied at Bologna, disdained not to receive academical honours at Oxford, as honours were then conferred; and after his promotion to the highest dignities in church and state, he attested, on all occa-

sions, his kind remembrance of the favours, which he had received. Richard I., who was born at Oxford, is stated to have patronised and fostered the University. To this statement, however, Berington demurs, and asks: "Because Richard's father often resided at Woodstock, and sometimes visited the monks at Abingdon, can it be thought that the love of letters attracted him to the spot, as on grounds not more substantial it is said of Beaulerc, who was probably impelled by the joys of the woods of Cunner and Bagley?"

Cambridge, which, from the ravages of the Danes, and the insults of the first Normans, had long lain in obscurity and neglect, revived about the year 1108, when Joffrid, Abbot of Croyland, intending to rebuild his monastery, which had been lately destroyed by fire, sent Master Gislebert, with three other monks, to his manor of Cottenham, whence they went every day to Cambridge, where, having hired a barn, they gave public lectures, and soon collected a great concourse of scholars; for in the second year after their arrival, the number of their scholars from the town and country increased so much that there was no house, barn, nor church capable of containing them. They accordingly dispersed over different quarters of the town: brother Odo read grammar early in the morning, to the boys and younger students; at one o'clock, brother Terrius read Aristotle's Logic to the elder class; at three, brother William gave lectures on Tully's Rhetoric and Quintilian's Institution; while master Gislebert, not understanding English, but very ready in the Latin and French languages, preached in the several churches to the people on Sundays and holidays. "Thus, from this small source, which has swollen into a great river, we now behold the city of God made glad, and all England rendered fruitful by many teachers and doctors issuing from Cambridge as from a most holy paradise." But a few years after this was written, during the war between King John and his barons, this paradise was entered and plundered by both parties.

Antony a Wood has preserved a few Latin verses by an English student at Paris, written in 1170, which well describe the spirit of display and love of expense for which his countrymen were already noted. The translation is as follows:—

Of noble manners, gracious look and speech,  
Strong sense, with genius brightened, shines in each.  
Their free hand still rains largess; when they dine,  
Course follows course, in rivers flows the wine.

The erection of Colleges in the Universities for the residence of their members, as separate communities, may be dated from about the middle of the thirteenth century.

University College is the *foundation* of King Alfred; but the present building is not of a date earlier than Charles I. The right of the crown to the visitation of the college rests, however on the ground that it is a royal foundation through Alfred; a claim which was preferred in favour of the royal prerogative in the Court of King's Bench, so lately as the year 1726. The University of Oxford is not much indebted to the kings of England for their munificence and benefactions, if we except Alfred.

## XII.

## HENRY III.—SETTLEMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

Henry III., surnamed of Winchester, from the place of his birth, was the eldest son of King John, and was born in 1206: he succeeded to the throne in the tenth year, his education being, in all probability, superintended by his guardian, William, Earl of Pembroke, who acted as Protector of the Kingdom.

With the thirteenth century, the English language began to be cultivated; and, about the commencement of the fourteenth century, our language had undergone the great change through the introduction of Norman words. Many French and Latin words have, indeed, been introduced in later ages, but by learning or caprice, rather than by the convenience of familiar intercourse.

An able critic in the *North British Review* thus describes this important epoch in the literature of our country:

An immense distance continued to exist between the Normans and the English people even so late as the early part of the fourteenth century. A Poitevin, who was prime minister in the time of Henry III., being asked to observe the great charter and the laws of the land, answered—"I am no Englishman that I should know these charters and these laws." Robert Grossetête, bishop of Lincoln, principal chaplain to the army of the barons, then reckoned only two languages in England, Latin for men of letters, and French for the uneducated, in which language he himself in his old age wrote pious books for the use of the laity, making no account of the English language, or of those who spoke it. The poets, even those of English birth, composed their verses in French; but there was a class of ballad-makers and romance-writers who employed either