

letters. The Venerable Bede had produced his works on ecclesiastical subjects, works still extant and to be found, no doubt, in more than one library in P. E. Island. King Canute, having weathered the storms of his earlier life, is said, 'mid the cares of state and in the intervals of his impossible scheme of founding a great Scandinavian empire with England as its head, to have turned his thoughts to the muse, though I am aware of only one solitary stanza, and that betraying no poetical power, attributed to his pen, which has reached our day.

Long before any of these, Cædmon, the Monk, shed a lustre over Saxon times. To those who are curious in such matters, it may be of interest to compare such fragments of the old Saxon as have come down to us, with the writings of Milton. There is a striking similarity in the genius of the two men, though the older poet was uneducated and illiterate, while Milton was, probably, the most profound scholar of his day.

Then, again, in the age before Chaucer, we have the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, an extraordinary monument to the industry of its compilers and a record indispensable to the enquirer into the early history of our race. Despite its bald method of bare entries, there are passages in it, which, in the very nakedness of their tale of trouble and misery, are as full of sadness and deep pathos as can well be imagined. As an illustration of this though it is a digression from the subject of this sketch, take the following few lines setting forth in terse, mournful tones, the miseries the people suffered during the anarchy of Stephen's reign. Speaking of the falseness of the baronage to the King and of the wretchedness of the times the old Chronicle tells us that:—

"They had sworn homage to him (i. e. to Stephen) and sworn oaths, but they no faith kept; all became foresworn, and broke their allegiance, for every rich man built his castles and defended them