

Ever since, the old English scholar has been called the Venerable Bede.

Bede lived in a most interesting period of the history of Europe, though in comparison with its importance, one little studied. He was born in the latter part of the seventh century, when in the midst of the intellectual barrenness of the Dark Ages, a few centres of learning were to be found here and there like cases in the desert. At the early age of seven years Bede was placed in the Monastery of St. Peter, Wearmouth, and at the age of ten was transferred to the associated institution of Jarrow, where all the rest of his long tranquil life was spent.

"I spent my whole life in the same monastery," he says, "and while attentive to the rule of my order and the service of the church, my constant pleasure lay in learning or teaching or writing." These words of his tell almost all there is to be told of the simple, uneventful life of this devoted man. In his nineteenth year he received the orders of deacon, and at the age of thirty was honored with the dignity of priesthood. While yet a young man he became a teacher and his school at Jarrow, which with the exception of that of York, was not surpassed in Western Europe, was composed of six hundred monks, besides strangers who came thither for instruction. He acquired so great a celebrity that many of the most eminent men of the time, including the Archbishop of York, came to consult him in questions relating to the church.

Pope Sergius I. desired that Bede should be sent to Rome to assist him in Ecclesiastical discipline. Bede, however, declined this honor, being anxious to devote all his time to his favorite task of writing, and until his death, in 755, he was constantly occupied with his chosen work.

The untiring industry and patient zeal of the Venerable Bede, are shown by the fact that in addition to performing the manifold duties of his position as priest and teacher, he left forty-five written treatises. The writings were in the department of History, Theology, Science and translation of the Scriptures into English.

The work which immortalizes his name is the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, written as were nearly all his works in Latin. A compendium of ancient records, of tradition and of observation, it is our chief original authority for the history of the Anglo-Saxons and their church for the century and a half that follow the landing of Augustine. Although somewhat imbued with the credulity of his time, this history is based upon enquiries made in the spirit of an historian; business like, yet childlike, practical, yet spiritual. The esteem in which the History was held is evident from the fact that King Alfred in translating, presented the substance of it in its original form, without change or addition.