

chase, and away they went across the fields into the forest. In a short time the dog apparently lost the scent, and back came the fox to the starting place. Now, a singular thing happened. The family of young foxes were called from a clump of bushes and away they all went in a direction opposite to that taken when luring the dog away. The young foxes were so small that the dog could easily have captured them, had the old fox not turned her wits to good account, and led him in an opposite direction. This piece of strategy was surely worthy of a general.

A CORRECTION. In the October number of the REVIEW lynxes are described as destructive to deer bears and birds. This sentence should have read: The lynxes are destructive to deer, hares and birds.

W. H. M.

### Lessons in English Literature.—III.

BY ELEANOR ROBINSON.

#### The Beginning of English Prose.

We have seen the beginnings of English poetry. The poetry of war and adventure began with the story of Beowulf, and sacred poetry began with Caedmon. But there is no English prose writing until long after the beginning of poetry.

Until near the end of the ninth century, there were no histories, or books of travel, or any learned books at all, written in the English tongue. All the wise books of that time were in Latin, so that only the learned people could read them.

But when that great and wonderful man, King Alfred, came to the throne, he was not satisfied that his people should be cut off from the learning of the rest of the world. He wanted every one of his young people to be able to read. But what was the use of their learning to read their own language if there were no books for them? So Alfred set to work, busy as he was with fighting for his people, and ruling them, to provide books for their learning. In a letter that he wrote to his bishops, he said that he remembered how the Greeks had learned by translating the books of the Hebrews from Hebrew into Greek, and the Romans had translated them into Latin. "Therefore, he said, "it seems better to me, if ye think so, for us also to translate some books which are most needful

for all men to know, into the language we can all understand."

Among the books which Alfred thought his people ought to know was the "History of the World." This book was written in the fifth century by a Spanish scholar named Orosius. It had been translated from the Latin in which it was written, into different languages, and was very widely read. King Alfred now turned it into English, so that the English people could know something of the history and geography of other countries. For there was a chapter on the geography of the world, as it was known in the time of Orosius, at the beginning of the book.

But, of course, between the fifth century and the ninth, travellers had found out new facts about geography. There were two men, named Othere and Wulfstan, who had made voyages in the north of Europe, and who told King Alfred what they had seen and heard on their travels. Othere had sailed up the coast of Norway, round the North Cape, and into the White sea, as far as to where Archangel now stands; and on a second voyage he sailed along the south and west coasts of Norway and among the Danish Islands. Wulfstan's voyage was in the Baltic, as far as the Gulf of Danzig.

Alfred thought that these travels would be interesting to English people, so he put stories that Othere and Wulfstan had told him into the middle of the chapter on geography, when he was translating it. I will tell you one of the things that Wulfstan told about the customs of the people of Esthonia, on the Baltic Sea.

Esthonia is very large, and there are many towns, and in every town there is a King. There is also very much honey and fishing. The King and the richest men drink mare's milk, but the poor and the slaves drink mead. There is very much war among them; and there is no ale brewed by the Esthonians, but there is mead enough. There is also a custom with the Esthonians, that when a man is dead he lies in his house, unburnt, with his kindred and friends a month—sometimes two; and the king, and other men of high rank, so much longer, according to their wealth, remain unburnt sometimes half a year, and lie above ground in their houses. All the while the body is within, there must be drinking and sports.

Then, the same day, when they wish to bear the body to the pile, they divide his property into five or six (unequal) parts. Then they lay the largest part of it within one mile from the town; then the next largest nearer the town; then another, till it is all laid within the one mile, and the smallest part is nearest the town. All the men who have the swiftest horses shall then be assembled about five or six miles from the property. Then they all run towards