

pure Saxon, which was now revived, or a dialect mixed up of Saxon and French, which served for the habitual communication between the higher and lower classes. This was the origin of our present language, which arose out of the necessities of society. In order to be understood by the people, the Normans *Saxonized* their speech as well as they could; and on the other hand, in order to be understood by the upper classes, the people *Normanized* theirs. This intermediate idiom first became current in the cities, where the population of the two races had become more intermingled, and where the inequality of conditions was less marked than in the rural districts.

About the middle of the fourteenth century, a great many poetical and imaginative works appeared in this new language. At length, the French language was entirely laid aside, not only in the courts of justice but also in the high court of Parliament, as well as by all the writers who addressed themselves to the middle classes and the lower populations. We still indeed retain a venerable relic of the old Norman, in the custom of giving the royal assent in that language:—the formula is—*Le Roy le veut*—*le Roy le scierera*,—not even, we believe, modernizing the orthography.

XIII.

ROGER BACON, AN EDUCATIONAL REFORMER.

At this early period, (about the middle of the thirteenth century,) there appeared a sagacious advocate of reform in education, reading, and reasoning, in Roger Bacon, who was born at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, near the year 1214. Till nearly the middle of the last century, the vulgar notion of him was that of the learned monk searching for the philosopher's stone in his laboratory, aided only by infernal spirits. He was accused of practising witchcraft, thrown into prison, and nearly starved; and, according to some, he stood a chance of being burned as a magician. He was educated at Oxford, and next proceeded to Paris, then the first university in the world. Returning to Oxford, he applied himself closely to the study of languages and experimental philosophy; but the lectures which he gave in the University were soon prohibited, and he was accused of magic, a charge then frequently brought against those who studied the sciences, and particularly chemistry. The following detached passages of his *Opus Majus* no doubt contain opinions which its author was in the habit of expressing:

Most students have no worthy exercise for their heads, and therefore languish and stupify upon bad translations, which lose them both time and money. Appearances alone rule them, and they care not what they know, but what they are thought to know by a senseless multitude:—There are four principal stumbling-blocks in the way of arriving at knowledge—authority, habit, appearances as they present themselves to the vulgar eye, and concealment of ignorance combined with ostentation of knowledge. Even if the first three could be got over by some great effort of reason, the fourth remains ready.—Men presume to teach before they have learnt, and fall into so many errors, that the idle think themselves happy in comparison—and hence, both in science and in common life, we see a thousand falsehoods for one truth.—And this being the case, we must not stick to what we heard read, but must examine most strictly the opinions of our ancestors, that we may add what is lacking, and correct what is erroneous, but with all modesty and allowance.—We must, with all our strength, prefer reason to custom, and the opinions of the wise and good to the perceptions of the vulgar; and we must not use the triple argument; that is to say, this has been laid down, this has been usual, this has been common, therefore it is to be held by. For the very opposite conclusion does much better follow than the premises. And though the whole world be possessed by these causes of error, let us freely bear opinions contrary to established usage.

The *Opus Majus* begins with a book on the necessity of advancing knowledge, and a dissertation on the use of philosophy in theology. It is followed by books on the utility of grammar and mathematics; in the latter of which the author runs through the various sciences of astronomy, chronology, geography, and music. Bacon was also long reputed to have been acquainted with gunpowder and the telescope; but the former is proved to have been known centuries before his time; and though he discovered optic lenses, he was not acquainted with the principle of the telescope.

XIV.

EDWARD II.—SCHOLARS IN HIS REIGN.

Edward II, the eldest surviving son of Edward I., born at Carnarvon in 1284, at the age of seven years lost his excellent mother, Eleanor of Castile, who would probably have guided his education better than his less stern father. He was of a kindly nature, of impulsive character and passionate will, though not wanting in courage; for at seventeen he led a battalion against the Scots.

Among the most distinguished names in literature and science that belong to the reign of Edward I. is Duns Scotus, a Franciscan

friar, educated in a convent of that Order at Newcastle. He became a Fellow of Merion College, Oxford, and professor of theology in the University, his great fame causing incredible numbers to attend his lectures. Although he died at the early age of forty-three, "he wrote so many books that one man is hardly able to read them." In his day he was accounted "the Subtle Doctor;" but his teaching was only in the Divinity of Schoolmen—far removed from the sound and useful learning which enables the scholar to discover the truth, and to impart the knowledge of it to others. Scotus having dared to controvert some positions of Thomas Aquinas, who was deemed the oracle of the Schools, he became the founder of a new sect in philosophy, and revived, with inextinguishable ardour, the old disputes between the *Realists* and the *Nominalists*. The Greeks and Persians, it has been observed, never fought against each other with more fury and rancour than these two discordant sects. Oxford was a grand theatre of their contests. Though much poetry now began to be written, the name of only one English poet has descended to posterity: Adam Davy or Davie, the author of various poems of a religious cast, which have never been printed. There is still extant a curious Latin poem on the battle of Bannockburn, written in rhyming hexameters, by Robert Baston, a Carmelite friar, whom Edward carried along with him to celebrate his anticipated victory; but who being taken prisoner, was compelled by the Scotch to sing the defeat of his countrymen in this jingling effusion. Bale speaks of this Baston as a writer of tragedies and comedies, some English: but none of them are now known to exist.

XV.

EDWARD III.—HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Edward III., the eldest son of Edward II., was born at Windsor in 1312. Joshua Barnes, in his life of this renowned king, a closely-printed folio volume of 900 pages, gives the following 'small taste' of his character.

Edward was proclaimed king when in his fifteenth year, and in a few months marched at the head of a large army against the Scotch; so that his boyhood presented few opportunities for his intellectual culture; but the glories of his reign of fifty years gave "a more vigorous activity to the faculties of England." This was the golden age of chivalry, of architecture, and of costume; and in literature the age of Chaucer—his tales being read alike in the baronial hall and the student's chamber. The universities were filled with scholars. From the Anglo-Norman had finally been evolved that noble tongue upon which our literature has been built, though many books perfectly intelligible to us were written before his reign. In 1307, Sir John Mandeville wrote a narrative of his Travels in English, as well as in French and Latin; and Wickliffe, the great Reformer, delivered his earliest appeals to the people on questions of religion in English.

(To be continued.)

LITERATURE.

POETRY.

THE PRAYER FOR ALL.

(From the French of Victor Hugo.)

To prayer, my child! and O, be thy first prayer
For her who many nights with anxious care,
Rock'd thy first cradle; who took thy infant soul
From heaven, and gave it to the world; then rife
With love, still drank herself the gall of life,
And left for thy young lips the honied bowl.

And then—I need it more—then pray for me:
For she is gentle, artless, true like thee;—
She has a guileless heart, brow placid, still:
Pity she has for all, envy for none;
Gentle and wise, she patiently lives on,
And ill endures, nor knows who does the ill.

She knows not,—nor mayst thou,—the miseries
In which our spirits mingle: vanities,
Remorse, soul gnawing cares, pleasure's false show;
Passions which float upon the heart like foam,
Bitter remembrances which o'er us come,
And shame's red spot spread sudden o'er the brow.