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Osgood, Stella Morris
Boston University

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EDUCATION IN THE BRITISH ISLANDS FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE DEATH OF ALFRED THE GREAT

Submitted by

STELLA MORRIS OSGOOD
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Education in the British Islands from the Introduction of Christianity to the Death of Alfred the Great.

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Education in the British Islands from the Introduction of Christianity to the Death of Alfred the Great.

Education includes more than the conscious endeavor to give instruction or develop the mental powers. Whatever leads to progress, whatever promotes civilization, is an educative factor. While systematic methods of instruction and training are of great importance, a study of the history of education within any given period and any territorial limits must include more than these. It must recognize the conditions that existed in the given field; the lines in which educative forces worked, -- not only intellectual and moral, but practical and spiritual as well; and therefore it will properly include the indirect social and material progress and the religious development that go hand in hand with intellectual advancement.

The discussion of education in the British Islands from the introduction of Christianity to the death of Alfred the Great in the year 901, therefore, will deal with the conditions by which the course of education was determined; the lines of development along which it worked; the educational system characteristic of the period, a topic which will include the curricula, the school "plants" of the time, and the various methods of the educators; the personality of famous teachers and pupils; and the purpose which stimulated that particular corner of Europe to keep itself from hopeless retrogression and to furnish inspiration to the western world in the centuries so often called, in a spirit of pessimism, the Dark Ages. Nor can any sketch be complete without an attempt to estimate the greatness of that inspiration and its influence upon later periods.
The first century after the birth of Christ was one of intellectual activity under Roman paganism. The imperial schools throughout the Empire unified the knowledge of the civilized world and promoted an appreciation of the achievements of the past. Even to the most distant provinces the Roman language, the Roman law, and the Roman learning made their way. But paganism as a religion was a "creed outworn", and the fact that Christianity was adopted by the politic Constantine early in the fourth century is evidence per se that the new faith was already a force to be reckoned with and was regarded by the Roman world with interest and tolerance.

What was this new force when it found its way to Britain? How had it been developed? What effect did it have upon existing pagan culture? At least a partial answer to these questions is necessary to an understanding of any phase of life in the British Islands during the early Middle Ages, and particularly of the educational phase.

Early Christianity was less a creed than a motive power affecting men's lives. It laid stress upon the importance of the individual, and at the same time it emphasized the equality of all men in the sight of God.

The conception of a universal brotherhood to be realized only in heaven, "had a sad effect upon earthly affairs; but in due time with the revival of learning and the rehabilitation of reason, it descended to the earth; and the modern world is the result." Temporarily, the concentration of men's minds upon the preparation for a future life led to the limitation of intellectual activity. Through the work of the Christian Fathers the culture of the ancients and the great truths of...
Christianity were made a part of the content of the mediaeval mind, but by the very medium of transmission they took on new forms and a formalism unknown to the literary friends of Augustus or the disciples who walked with Christ in Galilee. "The intellectual interests of the Christian Fathers", says Taylor in The Mediaeval Mind, "are not to be classified under categories of desire to know, for the sake of knowledge, but under categories of desire to be saved, and to that end possess knowledge in its saving forms. Their desire was less to know, than to know how -- how to be saved and contribute to the salvation of others. Their need rightly to understand the Faith, define it and maintain it, was of such drastic power as to force into ancillary roles every line of inquiry and intellectual effort. This need inspired those central intellectual labors of the Fathers which directly made for the Faith's dogmatic substantiation and ecclesiastical supremacy; and then it mastered all provinces of education and inquiry which might seem to possess independent intellectual interest. They were either to be drawn to its support or discredited as irrelevant distractions."

The antique culture did not seem adapted to the end that men were so generally seeking. The pagan schools, aside from the influence of Christianity, were undergoing a process of decay. They were out of touch with the spirit and needs of the time. The imperial control, while perhaps making education more general than it would have been if left to private patronage, yet had something of the deadening effect of too great paternalism; and as the government grew more despotic the incentive to independent thought became less. Indeed, it was not safe to have an opinion concerning politics or social
conditions, -- or at least it was better to keep such opinions to one's self. Naturally, therefore, the Roman schools in the later centuries of the Western Empire confined themselves to the practical needs of every-day life in a limited sphere, or, like the famous academy of Toulouse with its twelve Latinities, they pursued some useless fad to a senseless end.

Hence it came about that in the older Roman world, long before Christianity got a sure foothold in the British Islands, Christian schools were established to meet the recognized needs, and were duplicated wherever the Church came later to extend its influence. For a time they existed side by side with the pagan schools, which they tended gradually to supplant. In the catechumenal schools, the earliest of the Christian educational institutions, the instruction was primarily religious and was given by the pastor. Its design was to prepare new converts for baptism; and those who had completed the course and were admitted to the Church had been taught "to read the Bible and to understand and accept the fundamental Christian doctrines". A second kind of Christian school was the catachetical or theological school, in which religious instruction was combined with pagan culture, under the superintendence of the bishop. Last of the religious schools to develop, but most important in the Dark Ages, was the monastery school, which usually had a claustral division essentially ascetic, for training embryo monks, and an outer division open to any one who wished to take advantage of it.
Christian education made rapid progress. "At the beginning of the third century, Christians were expected to teach and study the liberal arts, profane literature, philosophy, and the Biblical languages," besides positive theology, Christian ethics, and such physical science as was then known. But how and when this system of education reached Britain and to what extent it was cultivated there, history does not record. Christianity certainly made its way thither along with the Roman civilization. Probably there as elsewhere Christian and pagan schools existed side by side. Agricola promoted education and imported Roman tutors, and under Hadrian the land was said to have been "conquered by Gallic schoolmasters". In Mona, druidism received a crushing blow, by which the faith of the people in their heathen gods must have been somewhat shaken. But, as far as England itself is concerned, it is unnecessary to try to find out what stage of educational progress had been reached under Roman sway; for the Saxon invasions threw the country back again into barbarism.

The significance of the Christianizing of Roman Britain is that Ireland received from its near neighbor the first impulse to its own conversion, and a knowledge of the Roman alphabet at least. When the Anglo-Saxons, with no written language, and with a heathen religion, crossed the North Sea and fell upon the Britons, whom the Romans had left unprotected in the general upheaval caused by the barbarian invasions of Italy itself, the natives were forced back to the remote corners of Wales and Cornwall and the borders of Scotland. Scotland had never been conquered by the Romans, and was still a heathen Celtic country. Ireland, too, had remained free from Roman control,
but, since its shores lay so near the greater island, it had received a knowledge of writing and had fallen under the influence of Christian missionaries before the Anglo-Saxons had crushed all the culture and refinements of life from the heart of Britain. And so, while Britain fell a prey to the land-lust of the Teutons, in Erin some learning not only lived but grew, to be carried again in due time to the land whence it came, and all over central Europe as well.

The Irish, or Scoti, as the dwellers in Ireland were called in the early centuries, were especially fitted to be the defenders and propagators of mediaeval learning. The origin of the people is unknown. Apparently the boggy land was overrun by successive waves of conquerors, long before Rome extended its sway over Europe, until at length it was settled and ruled by the Celts, who were superior to other races in open-mindedness and imaginative power. Very early in the Christian era and wholly independent of Christian influence there had grown up among the Scoti a culture and a system of education which proved both a help and a hindrance in the introduction of Christian education.

Their religion was idolatrous, although it appears that the ancient custom of offering human sacrifices had been abandoned before Christian missionaries arrived in the island. Among their religious ideas were those of rebirth and immortality,—a significant fact in considering the comparative ease with which Christianity spread after its introduction.

Learning was highly esteemed. It was in the hands of the privileged classes, — the druids, the bards, and the brehons. Whether the druids were a regular national priesthood as
they were in Gaul is uncertain. The introduction to the Senchus Mor does not mention them as a public body. The evidence of Irish literature, however, proves that they were ambassadors and teachers. They taught men the doctrine of rebirth to make them brave; they also acted as prophets, and as mediators between man and the supernatural.

The second group of learned men, the bards, included both poets and chroniclers. Their importance was due largely to the form of government under which the Scoti lived. Their tribal system allowed no one to possess lawfully any soil of his tribe unless he were of the same race as his chief. Therefore pedigrees had to be kept very carefully. All the genealogies were "entered in the local books of each tribe and preserved in the verses of the hereditary poets." Besides the pedigrees of the chief families, the poet-chronicler must also know "their topographical distribution, the synchronisms of remarkable events both at home and abroad, and the etymologies of names in Erin." The chroniclers had to bring their books to the Feis, or parliaments, which were held triennially at Tara, and there the books were purified of whatever could not be substantiated. "Nothing that disagreed with the Roll of Tara could be respected as truth." The bards studied for at least twelve years, taking a series of courses each of which gave an additional degree, until the highest degree, that of ollamh, was obtained. The candidate for poet-ollamh must be able to recite three hundred and fifty stories, -- tales of voyages, of love, and of battle. He must also have a technical knowledge of the artistic rules of poetry, and he must be able to compose extemporaneous verses on any subject proposed to him. The poets,
as distinct from the chroniclers, wrote eulogies or satires which were much prized or more dreaded.

The third of the privileged orders, the brehons, were judges, learned in the law. A very ancient law book says that a judge must be also a historian, and a historian a judge. But the two seem to be distinct in the fourth century. The law of the Scoti was derived from three sources,—decisions of ancient judges, handed down by tradition; customary law regulating their social relations; and the enactments of the parliaments, or great Feis of Tara. The Senchus Mor, to which reference has already been made, was their book of civil law; two other books dealt respectively with criminal law and with the rights of the Ard-Reagh, or chief kings, and the provincial kings. It has been said by scholars that such laws could not have been produced by any race which had not been under the influence of education for generations.

The poet-ollamh, the brehon, and the druid were held in great honor, and each enjoyed special privileges at the court of his chief. The ollamh or brehon had a settled income of twenty-one cows; support for himself and a retinue of twenty-four, including pupils, tutors, and servants; and a title to be supplied at need with hounds and horses. When he travelled his pupils went with him. He was entertained by the nobles, and had the privilege of sanctuary. It is not to be wondered at that the calling proved attractive, and that at one time a third of the Scoti in Erin were of the privileged class, maintained at the expense of the unlearned.

A system of learning so elaborate could not well exist without a written language. The Roman alphabet must have been
known long before the days of St. Patrick, though it cannot be safely asserted that its use was general until then. A peculiar form of writing known as the Ogham was devised in pre-Christian times, and used to some extent by the druids. The alphabet consisted of a series of lines and dots along a stem line which was often the angle of a stone. Many Ogham inscriptions on stones have been found in the lands of the Gael, and furnish another bit of evidence that in intellectual ingenuity he was superior to the neighboring barbarians.

Into a country thus permeated with a love for learning and already partially familiarized with Christianity from its intercourse with Britain came Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. He was the son of Calpurnius, a deacon and also a local official of Bannaventa under the Roman government. Captured in an Irish raid and kept as a slave in Ireland for six years, he escaped at last, and made his way to Gaul. Here he staid for a time at Lérins under the illustrious Honoratus. While on a visit to his kinsmen in Britain, he was convinced by a dream that duty led him back to preach to the Irish. But he was not ready to go until he had returned to Gaul and spent some years in preparation under Germanus of Auxerre, by whom he was ordained bishop and sent forth to his task. While Leo the Great was pope, Patrick went from Ireland to visit Rome, and "was approved in the Catholic faith".

His zeal and success in his missionary labor were great, but the importance of his work for education rests mainly upon two facts,—that he won the friendship of the learned class already existing, and that he established presumably the first Christian school, or series of schools, in Ireland. Very early in his work, according to the Lebor-na-hUidre, he revised the brehon
S.M. Osgood.

laws, through a commission of three kings; three bishops, including himself; and three men of science, namely, the chief brehon, a doctor of the legal dialect, and the poet Fergus. The revision was put into the form known as the Senchus Mor. By this and other wise concessions to native customs Patrick gained the support of leading men and paved the way for the success of his mission. As he founded churches he needed trained ministers. Some he had brought from Britain: other promising converts he taught as he travelled about, taking them in his rather numerous retinue. Soon, however, he took a step of great import in the progress of education,—he established the monastery and school of Armagh. Henceforth, in Ireland and wherever Irish culture spreads, the monastery school becomes the most potent factor in education. It is well to mark that just at this period, about 445 A.D., the Roman culture was being destroyed in Britain, and therefore for generations Irish culture was left to develop without direct Roman influence. Of its peculiar features mention will be made later; here, only the rapid increase of schools is to be noted. Armagh soon attracted students not only from Ireland but from England and other countries also. In the seventh century so many English were there that one of the three divisions of the city was called the Saxon Third. By the ninth century its students numbered seven thousand. Gildas, the historian, was in its early years one of the famous heads of the school. Patrick is said to have founded about a hundred other schools; and certain it is that schools sprang up with a growth almost miraculous after the beginning made by him.

Brigit was not much later than Patrick in establishing a renowned school. Her monastery at Kildare, founded about 480,
was a double one, including a house for monks and another for nuns. Brigit called to assist her in governing her disciples a bishop, St. Conlaeth, who was a scholar and also a skilled metal worker; and the school of Kildare became renowned for its metal work and decorative art. A second bishop instructed Brigit and her nuns in learning and righteousness. A passage quoted from The Book of Lismore indicates that Brigit was a noted patroness of scholars. The story is told of how she converted a "son of reading", and "thence it came to pass that the comradeship of the world's sons of reading is with Brigt, and the Lord gives them through Brigt every perfect good they ask." Kildare remained an important monastery until the days of Queen Elizabeth of England.

It will be possible to mention only a few of the numerous schools that may be called the descendants of St. Patrick's foundations. Mochae, one of his disciples, founded Noendrum where education and monastic discipline were combined. Mocnta, a Briton by birth and trained in childhood by a druid, founded a monastery at Louth, and there he was surrounded by "three hundred presbyters, one hundred bishops, and sixty or eighty singers, who 'ploughed not, reaped not, dried not corn, labored not save at learning only.'" Beg-Erin was the retreat of St. Ibar, and crowded with his disciples; and Emly was the school of Ailbe, -both of whom may have been at work in Ireland before Patrick came, but who nevertheless recognized his leadership. Bonan, "above all things a scholar and a psalm singer", had a school at Kilbannon; and his sister, a church and convent at Tawnagh. Elphin was the seat of a theological school in the fifth century. Aran-of-the-Saints deserves its title, for, from
its founding by Enda in 480, the monastery was the nursery of some of the greatest teachers and the resort of foreign students.

The schools thus far named were founded before 500 A.D. In the following centuries sprang up scores that were even larger and more famous, so that Ireland with reason came to be known as **insula sanctorum et doctorum**. Every monastery was a school, with fifty or more pupils; and monasteries besprinkled Ireland like buttercups in a meadow. The map on the preceding page shows some of the more famous centres of learning.

Clonfert was founded by Brendan, a famous traveler, an account of whose voyage of seven years in the Atlantic can be read in many a manuscript. After years of travel and study he came to the banks of the Shannon and there established a monastery and school, under a Rule of his own. Three thousand disciples gathered around him in his lifetime, though, as he established other schools, it is not necessary to suppose they were all at Clonfert. Many of his pupils were leaders of learning. One was Fursey, a "seer of visions"; another, Fintan, a famous choir-master. Cummian the Tall, of a later century, was a bishop under whom Clonfert lost none of the fame it had gained under St. Brendan. Cummian, indeed, is ranked as the foremost scholar of his day. A letter written by him to Segienus, Abbot of Hy, concerning the date of Easter proves his knowledge. In it he referred to all the cycles by which Easter was computed; he gave Hebrew, Greek, and Egyptian names of the first lunar month; he showed his familiarity with the Christian Fathers; and he wrote in Latin that, even though it lacked polish, excelled much later work. Like many others of the great schools of Erin, Clonfert prospered until the Danish inroads, and even
now an old Cathedral Church is still in use there.

The founder of Clonard, St. Finnian, was known as the "tutor of the saints of Erin." "The Twelve Apostles of Erin" were all disciples at Clonard, and in their turn established great centres of learning. Clonard was favorably situated on the border between the northern and southern halves of Ireland, in a sort of neutral territory, and drew its students from all quarters. The school was founded about 520, and soon three thousand had gathered there to learn from Finnian a knowledge of the Bible; for the Saint was skilled in this branch of wisdom, and then as now the Irish loved to hear explained the mysteries of God. But Finnian's teaching was oral, and, though no doubt the students wrote much, very little now remains. One fragment, the work of Aileran the Wise, chief professor of Clonard about 660, is mentioned by Healy, who says of it, "Whether we consider the style of the Latinity, the learning, or the ingenuity of the writer, it is equally marvellous and equally honorable to the school of Clonard."

Lismore in the south, and Bangor and Moville in the northeast, trained and sent forth men of wisdom and piety. Columba was the most famous scholar of Moville, which was in time eclipsed by Bangor. No less than four thousand monks are said to have been connected at one time with Bangor. Thence went Columban, Gallus, and, greatest of Irish philosophers, Scotus Erigena. Bangor was, however, destroyed by the Danes in 824. Lismore was founded by St. Carthage, who, after laboring nearly forty years at Rahan, had been driven away by the jealous monks of Durrow. Only two years did he live in his new monastery,
but his work endured for centuries, and the school at Lismore became second to none except Clonmacnois. Cathal was a student and teacher there, and his lectures were attended by Gauls, Angles, Irish, and Teutons. Cathal afterwards went to Tarentum, whose annalists acknowledge unreservedly the debt that ancient city owed to Lismore.

One might be inclined to question the accuracy of the statements regarding the numbers who attended these schools. But it must be remembered that dormitories were not needed then, for each newcomer built his own little hut. As for feeding the multitude, the monasteries with which the schools were connected were in part self-supporting, the neighbors were generous, and the students required less, as to both the quantity and the quality of their food, than does the modern college student. Therefore it is not necessary to cry "Impossible!" when the chroniclers tell about the thousands who were drawn together by the reputation of some great teacher. Besides, Ireland was peculiar in that even to the eighth or ninth century it still lived under a tribal system, and many of the monasteries were only a new organization of the ancient clans whereby the clansmen were connected in some capacity with the religious settlement.

Clonmacnois, however, belonged to no tribe, and therefore it is more of a national seminary than any other school. For six centuries it was a teacher of the highest learning. Here were written the most accurate annals, and the most charming Gaelic poems. Here were produced the best specimens of ancient Celtic sculpture and architecture. Beautiful for situation was it, on the bank of the Shannon, and a hundred churches were its willing
subjects and supporters. Alcuin, of world-wide fame, long walked among its books as a student. St. Kieran Mac In Tsair -- the Son of the Carpenter -- who two centuries earlier had laid the foundations of this great school, Alcuin calls "the glory of the Irish nation."

Volumes have been written about the noble schools of Ireland, and indeed the subject is an inspiration in itself. But not in Ireland was the light of Celtic learning first kindled, nor did the shores of the island, swept by wind and wave, keep the great light from making its way far abroad.

At least a very little space must be given to the schools of Wales and West Britain, whence went the civilizing influence of Christianity westward to Erin, and whither it returned again increased a hundred fold.

"The great school" of Ninian at Whitherne in Galloway about 400 A.D. was frequented by scholars from Britain and Ireland, and included an elementary school for the children of the neighborhood. Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, sent as papal legates to suppress the Pelagian heresy, established "schools of learning for clergy and laity", and, though the connection of Germanus with the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge is apocryphal, the influence of his schools was wide and lasting. The monastery of Lantwit in Glamorganshire, under Iltutus, a disciple of Germanus, had twenty-four hundred members, including Gildas the historian and Taliesin the bard. Bangor on the Dee, formerly a Christian school, was restored also by Iltutus, and largely attended by "promising youths".

From another Bangor went St. David, in his turn to found twelve monasteries in which "plowing and grammar-learning
succeeded each other by turns; his monastery at Menevia "was no less a school of polite learning than it was a nursery of saints". St. Asaph, or Llan-Elwy, was established by Kentigern, trained under the first bishop of Orkney, and driven from his diocese in Scotland by a usurping prince. Gathering his disciples about him in Llan-Elwy, he established a monastic rule which was out of the ordinary in this respect at least,—only one of the three groups into which he divided his monks was engaged in study, teaching, and preaching. In 544 Kentigern was recalled to Scotland, and left Llan-Elwy to Asaph, by whose name it was thereafter called.

The most interesting of the Welsh scholars is Cadoc, who was prince and scholar and great teacher. His earliest instructor was an Irishman, Tathai, at the monastery of Gwent. After twelve years of study under him, Cadoc went to Icismore. Returning to Wales, he found a British tutor who had recently studied in Italy, and who taught Latin and the liberal arts in the most approved fashion. Cadoc chose the life of a scholar and monk rather than that of a prince, and refused to succeed his rather in governing his principality. Instead, he became the head of a school which was in his time — the sixth century — a great resort for sons of chiefs and petty kings. The maxims which he impressed upon his pupils are inspiring enough to be the basis of education, in any place or period.— "Without knowledge," taught Cadoc, "no power, no wisdom, no freedom, no beauty, no nobleness, no victory, no honor, no God." Poetry he loved and gave high place in his instruction. "No man is the son of knowledge if he is not the son of poetry." And the reason he gives thus:
"No man loves poetry without loving the light;
Nor the light without loving the truth;
Nor the truth without loving justice;
Nor justice without loving God.

And he who loves God cannot fail to be happy."

Cadoc had his objects of hatred, too, -- the counterpart of his loves. "I hate", says a poem of his, "a man without a trade,---
a house without a teacher, --- fables in place of teaching,
knowledge without inspiration, sermons without eloquence, and a man without a conscience." Here is a teacher's creed, a set of ideals which mark the sharp distinction between the Christian school as it had developed in the West and the purposeless learning to which the pagan schools of imperial Rome had degenerated.

Yet, here among the Celts in Wales and Ireland, Christianity manifested far less hostility to pagan culture than it did within the limits of the old Empire. In the third century Tertullian had recommended Christians to attend the pagan schools, but warned them to select the good and reject the evil; and he became more suspicious and hostile as time went on. Hellenism was the deadly enemy of the new religion in the fourth century. Paulinus in the fifth century wrote to his pagan teacher,"He [God] forbids me give up my time to the vanities of leisure or business, and the literature of fable, that I may obey his laws and see his light, which is darkened by the cunning skill of the sophist, and the figments of the poet who fills the soul with vanity and falsehood, and only trains the tongue." In Ireland, however, which never had been Romanized, and later in Anglo-Saxon England, where the barbarians had destroyed every vestige
of the ancient culture, there was not the suspicion and
dislike of pagan learning that necessarily arose in the Empire
when Christianity and paganism were engaged in a life-and-death
struggle. Therefore the Greek and the Latin literature were
more generally cultivated in these western islands than in the
cities of the continent. The knowledge of Greek, indeed, was
kept from total extinction by the Irish scholars. In the period
between 500 and 800 the standard of learning was higher and
education drew from broader sources under the Irish influence
than elsewhere. Irish theology came from Amorose, Jerome,
Augustine, and the other great Christian Fathers of the fourth
century, in whom Christianity had not crushed the love of
literature; Virgil and the Greek writers were admired and cherished
and the first sources of Christianity were freely consulted.

There were other causes too, that gave to Irish culture a
peculiar cast. One of the most important of these is to be
found in the Celtic character. More than other nations, the
Celts were endowed with a taste for the mystic; with a passion
for music, which can be traced far back into pre-Christian times,
since their earliest annals describe a druid chieftain's harp,
one string of which moved to laughter, another to tears; with a
love of form, beauty, company, and the society of women; and with
a quality which "responds with peculiar energy to the stimulus
of rhetorical training." They were impressionable and emotional,
and thus better fitted to transmit all phases of pagan culture
than was a more stolid race like the Teutons.

The bardic schools were both an effect and a cause of this
national character, and themselves impressed something of a
romantic and poetic quality upon the national education. Mention has already been made of the druidic Irish culture, which came to center about the poet, the historian, and the brehon. From the year 590, when by the Synod of Drumceat lands were set aside for their endowment, the schools of the bards existed as public institutions side by side with the Christian schools. Armagh itself, St. Patrick's great school, was close by the site of Navan fort, where for six centuries the Red-Branch knights had had a school of chivalry. Though it had been destroyed nearly a century before Patrick's coming, who can doubt that the traditions of all manly exercises and deeds of valor in which the knights were trained gave to the place an atmosphere not wholly without its influence? The bardic schools were for generations peripatetic. Wherever the master was, there was the school; and students followed the teacher to whom they were attached all over Ireland. The instruction included much of music and poetry, much of superstition; and withal much of courtesies and of practical wisdom, as can be inferred from the fragments still remaining of metrical text-books and poems, and, more rarely, prose treatises owing their origin to the bardic teaching. In the latter class the Instruction of a Prince, purporting to be a series of questions and answers exchanged between Prince Cairbre and his father, the great Cormac Mac Art, is of especial interest for its high ideals of courtesy and princely graciousness. The bards and their pupils were freely entertained by the people. Heron says that there was a lay school which corresponded to a modern university in each of the five provinces, and something like an intermediate school in each tribal territory, and that these
were well endowed. No similar institutions of learning
could have been found on the continent before the time of
Charlemagne and his Palace School.

Furthermore, the isolation of Ireland from the churches
under Roman control and the Celtic liking for independent in-
vestigation caused the Irish church and its schools to develop
certain forms and opinions different from those held at Rome.
It is reasonable to assume that at the time of Ireland's conver-
sion details of ritual had not been fixed; therefore it is not
surprising that by the beginning of the seventh century the
Irish monks had adopted a tonsure and the Irish scholars a
method of reckoning the date of Easter which eventually brought
them into conflict with the representatives of Rome. While such
matters are not in themselves of great importance in a study of
education, they are alluded to here because of two things: first,
the evidence they furnish of the habit of independent thinking
in the Irish schools; and secondly, the effect of the rivalry of
Rome upon the work of the Irish missionaries, who accomplished
miracles in the work of civilizing Europe, but who were at last
converted or supplanted by the dominating force of the Holy See.

Perhaps the 

wanderlust

of the Irish should be reckoned along

with their Christian zeal as the motive power that drove them
forth to distant lands. Their love of journeying was a matter of
frequent comment in the contemporary chronicles. Indeed, they
were so famous as travelers that the word pilgrim in St. Gall's
vocabularies was the technical term for Irishman. Unquestion-
ably, also, they were sincere and earnest almost to the point of
fanaticism in their desire to extend the light that had come to
them.
An almost incredible number of missionaries and scholars set forth from the ports of Erin between 600 and 1000. That so small a country could send forth such throngs of men trained to propagate their faith and their learning would be unaccountable to one who did not know of the hundreds of monastery and lay schools which had arisen or were arising within its borders and from which the ranks of the scholar monks were constantly recruited. It was a brehon law that every first-born child should be dedicated to the church, and of eleven or more children a second son also. These "tithe-offerings" of children were educated in the monastery schools, and went thence by dozens and scores to carry Irish culture over Europe. Dicuil of Besançon; Cathal of Tarentum; Fursey of East Anglia and France; Fergil, bishop of Salzburg; Willibrod (Irish by training, though not by birth) of Friesland, these are a few of the many great-souled Irish scholars who promoted civilization in foreign lands. It needs only a little imagination to picture them at work all over Western Europe, reclaiming the waste places, preaching salvation, and teaching whosoever chanced to come to them.

Columban is one whose personality exerted a vast influence upon European civilization. His biographer Jonas has drawn him as a human being -- a man of energy, strong-willed and fearless, disciplining himself and his monks under a rigid rule. From other sources an impression of his high scholarship can be drawn. He was trained at Bangor, and went to Gaul in the Merovingian period. Gregory of Tours was at that time one of the foremost churchmen and scholars on the continent. Jubainville compares
the two, greatly to the advantage of Columban, saying that
one needs only to cast his eye over the writings of Columban
to recognize at once his marvellous superiority over Gregory
and the Gallo-Romans of his time. Columban wrote excellent
poetry, handling the Sappnic verse with some degree of skill,
and in various poems showing his familiarity with Horace,
Virgil, and Juvenal. Apparently he had learned some Hebrew
also at Bangor. In 590 he appeared in Gaul with twelve com-
rades, penniless, but equipped each one with his bag of books,
and began his preaching. King Sigebert gave him lands for a
monastery, and Luxeuil became another centre from which scores
of monasteries sprang. From the Seine to the Scheldt, and
from the North Sea to Lake Geneva, the land was dotted with
the foundations of its monks. St. Gall in Switzerland, re-
nowned for its library and its learning, was established by
one of Columban's comrades, Gallus, for whom it was named.
Columban himself restored Bobbio, and ended his life there.

The constant addition of newcomers from Ireland itself
recruited the numbers and revived the zeal of the continental
workers.

After the Irish monasteries on the continent had come under
the Benedictine Rule, as they eventually were destined to do, a
second wave of culture spread from the British Islands over the
mainland of Europe, under the patronage of Charlemagne. The
educational rather than the religious phase was brought into
prominence; and here too, as well as two centuries earlier, the
scholars of Ireland are the crest of the wave. Alcuin, the
librarian of York and master of Charlemagne's Palace School,
belongs to all three countries, -- England, Gaul, and Ireland.
He was a pupil of Colgu at Clonmacnoise, and in grateful remembrance persuaded his monarch to send a generous gift of silver for the brotherhood there. It is said that two Irish scholars, Dungal and Clement, landing without funds in Gaul, gained the attention of Charlemagne by crying in the market place of Aachen, "Wisdom to sell! Who will buy?" The King, finding the only price they asked for their valuable wares was "a place to teach, pupils to learn, and needful food and raiment", put Clement in charge of the Palace School, and sent Dungal to Pavia, where in the year 843 he was still presiding over the academy.

A third period in which Irish scholars won fame abroad was in the ninth century. Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, gathered another group of scholars at his court. Since the Danish invasions were then making life in the western islands very insecure, and since Gaul offered more attractions to the studious than did any other country, so many Irish monks took refuge there that Henry of Auxerre, a chronicler of the time, said 'it seemed as if all Ireland herself were coming'.

King Charles was somewhat given to speculation, and somewhat also to jesting; and in a "son of Eris", John Scotus Erigena, he found a kindred spirit. Many jests passed over the table between the King and the Scot, and many literary and philosophical discussions. Erigena was a noted Greek scholar. In an age when few knew Greek, he translated the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius. He was independent in his reasoning and promulgated views that were not strictly orthodox. He incurred the displeasure of Pope Nicholas, and probably retired to end his days in his native land. Though he was the foremost scholar
of the century, he did not receive due credit until the Renaissance brought his genius to the notice of the literary world.

Even before Columban and his successors had gone eastward, other monks and hermits had explored and settled in the islands north and west. The barren island of Hy, or Iona, was the place of exile of Columba, "the greatest saint of the Celtic race." His countrymen were proud of him, and there is a pretty legend which shows what a high place he held in their regard.

A vision came to St. Finnian. He saw, arising in the sky, two moons, one of silver and the other of gold. The silver moon shone with gentle lustre upon the hills and streams of Ireland only; but the golden moon, rising in the North of Ireland, poured its radiance not only upon Ireland, but also upon Caledonia and England. The silver moon was Kieran, founder of Clonmacnois; and the moon of gold was St. Columba, through whom light was indeed shed upon the tribes of Great Britain. Columba was descended through both parents from royal blood, and could trace his line back to the great king, Niall of the Nine Hostages.

While he was a student at Moville, his comrades nicknamed him Columcille, "dove of the church", and by that name historians often speak of him. He continued his studies under the bard Gemman, (for, as has been said before, the bardic order was a recognized educational factor in Ireland,) and also at the great college of Clonard, where he was numbered among the Twelve Apostles of Erin. In 546 he founded at Derry his first church, placing the chancel towards the north instead of the east, in order to spare the magnificent oak grove that he dearly loved. Durrow and Kells were also founded by him, and each treasured in
its library some wonderful manuscripts done by his own hand; for he was a choice scribe, and wrote, it is said, no less than three hundred "gifted, lasting, noble, illuminated books".

His passion for copying beautiful manuscripts led indirectly to his banishment. According to tradition, he had stealthily copied the Psalms from the precious book which Finnian had brought from Rome. Finnian claimed the copy, and King Diarmid gave judgment in his favor. After a second insult from the rash king, Columcille, in a spirit that belied his name, it must be admitted, roused his kinsmen to take arms against him. A bloody battle ensued, in which Columcille's party was victorious. Conscience-smitten, however, because he had been the cause of so many deaths, Columba was bidden by St. Molaise, his confessor, to go from Ireland and to win in other lands as many souls for the service of Christ as the lives which had been lost on his account. With unhesitating obedience he prepared to leave his beloved country; and, accompanied by a band of monks from Derry, he went in his currach over the sea until his eyes could no longer trace the faintest outline of Erin.

Iona, the little island on which they settled, is bare and unpromising, quite unlike the places, full of potential resources at least, where monasteries were wont to rise. Yet, bleak and small though it be, no spot in all Europe was more famous for learning and religious zeal than Columba's school made this island, which Dr. Johnson characterized as "the illustrious island which was once the luminary of Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion." Those who came from the outside world to visit the monastery of Hy would stand on
the shore of Mull, just across a narrow strait, and shout
for the monks to bring a boat and take them over. So great
was the number of those who came to the home of the Saint that
the echo of one cry scarcely died away before another would
be heard,—voices of men seeking health of soul or body, or
pleading permission to become disciples of the holy man.

Iona was too small to accommodate the ever-increasing throngs,
and therefore colony after colony went to settle new communities
in the neighboring islands and Caledonia. These did not become
independent, but continued under the authority of the parent
monastery. The western islands and the south-western part of
Caledonia were settled by Scots whose ancestors had come from
Ireland some generations earlier. Among them Columba was well
received and his work met no great hindrance. But the fierce
Picts, who dwelt in the north and east of the great island,
seemed to him to be the destined objects of his especial care.
For thirty-seven years he traveled up and down these wild regions
among clans equally wild. Though he gained the favor of the
Pictish king, he found his labors hindered by the enmity of the
druids, who dogged his footsteps everywhere and used every means
to prevent the adoption of his teaching. Unlike the Irish druids,
those of Caledonia were priests rather than teachers, and there-
fore less susceptible to the teachings of Christianity. Finally,
however, Columba succeeded in destroying the Druidic power even
in the last refuge of Celtic paganism. To his own delight, he
found that the teachings of Minian, who had come from Wales a
century earlier, were not entirely obliterated; and Kentigern,
of whom mention has been made, is said to have spent six months
with him in the monastery of Dunkeld, and to have continued his
work successfully in Caledonia thereafter.

Thus, steadily and persistently, the work of enlightenment went on with hardly a check, from St. Patrick to Columban and Columcille, until Ireland, Wales, and Caledonia with its adjacent islands were the most highly cultured regions of the West, and had already entered upon their missionary work in other countries. When at last the Danes by their repeated attacks destroyed the security of the monasteries, the monks gathered their precious books and fled to join their countrymen in Gaul and Germany, bearing with them all that was best of their craftsmanship and their sacred and secular learning to increase and prosper in foreign lands.

But alas! the Anglo-Saxons were left for two centuries untaught and even unconverted. Iona, whose final destiny it was to become the point of union among all the British Isles, did not take the initiative in the conversion of England, but sent its monks only in response to a request from the Northumbrian king as late as the year 635. The native Britons were worse than indifferent -- they were actually opposed to any attempt to convert the Saxons, whom they looked upon as hateful alike to God and man. "Among other most wicked actions" says Bede, speaking of the Britons, "they added this- that they never preached the faith to the Saxons, or English, who dwelt among them; however, the goodness of God did not forsake His people, whom He foreknew, but sent to the aforesaid nation much more worthy preachers, to bring it to the faith." This quotation is a fitting introduction to a study of the progress of civilization in England; for the preachers to whom he refers were Benedictine monks, who henceforth controlled the schools and the Church in England.
Whether for good or evil, the Anglo-Saxon school was the child of the Church alone. Here were no bardic schools to rival or supplement those of the monasteries; here were no professors of law or poetry. Neither was there among the Anglo-Saxons the knowledge of a written language for common use. Though they knew Runic characters they associated them only with magic arts. They had, to be sure, even before they came to Britain, a spoken language, a minstrel poetry, and at least the germs of a mythology based upon nature worship. Yet they were far from being as ready as the Irish had been, two hundred years earlier, for the coming of apostles among them.

It may sound paradoxical to say modern civilization is the better because this was their condition, and because when they made their homes in Britain there was no Roman substratum to affect their development. If any place and time in history could be called the Dark Ages, that place and time would be England in the fifth and sixth centuries. One might look long and fail to see any hope, not for intellectual achievements, -- to look for them would be expecting too much, -- but even for any peaceful progress in the arts of life. But the ground was there, nevertheless, upon which was to develop a people who would save the work already accomplished by the Scots, add to it worthily, and pass it on to other lands and future ages.

One may take exception to Bede's opinion that the preachers from Rome were "more worthy" than the native Britons. Be that as it may, they were probably more successful than the British or Irish monks could have been, for reasons that will be indicated later. It is fortunate therefore that the conversion of England was begun under the inspiration of the Holy See. The
story of Augustine and his mission to the "Angles" of Britain is familiar to everyone. As a part of their necessary equipment Pope Gregory sent books to his missionaries. The Canterbury Book, giving a catalogue of the manuscripts brought with Augustine, calls them the foundation of the library of the whole English Church. Under Augustine the See of Canterbury was established, and the Kentish capital became the seat also of the first Benedictine monastery and school in the British Islands. While for a number of years the hostility of the Britons and the turbulence of the Saxons confined the activities of the Roman clergy to the Southern part of England, and the See of Canterbury was occupied by foreign bishops because there were no natives of ability in the Church, the school at Canterbury maintained its existence and extended its influence.

Only a generation after Augustine's death, King Sigebert the Learned of East Anglia, when he set up a school in which boys might be instructed in letters, turned to Canterbury for his model and his teachers. Besides, the scholar Fursey came to Sigebert's kingdom, and lived there for a time in a monastery which he founded. Thus East Anglia rivalled Kent as a home of learning.

Meantime events brought Northern England into contact with the Irish Church. King Oswald, already a Christian, sent to Iona for a bishop. Aidan came in response to the call, and was given the Isle of Lindisfarne as the seat of his bishopric. The king himself interpreted the word of God to his commanders and ministers, since he spoke both Irish and Saxon, while Aidan was not skilful in the English tongue. Through the preaching and teaching of the monks of Lindisfarne during the sixteen years that Aidan spent before his death in Northumbria, all the North of
England came closely under the influence of Iona, which, it will be recalled, had already become the greatest literary centre of the Irish Church.

Inevitably the Catholic clergy from the South and the Celtic clergy from the North extended their fields of labor into the lands which lay between. Rivals as the two churches were, they must engage in a contest for the supremacy in England. As the course of history has proved, not merely a matter of religious rites and church discipline was to be determined, but the whole course of English civilization was to be affected by the result of the struggle.

During the middle of the seventh century the Irish Church made the more rapid progress. One reason for this was that Ireland and Scotland were very easy of access to the Anglo-Saxons, and their schools were open to all comers. In the year 664, according to Bede, many English nobles, and many of the lower classes also, were in Ireland; some in the monasteries, others going about from one master's cell to another, to study under the greatest teachers; and "the Scots willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with food, as also to furnish them with books to read, and their teaching, gratis." Saxon scholars also had sojourned in Iona, and, now that Columba's monastery had been brought into touch with England, intercommunication quickly increased. Iona was at last fulfilling its destiny. Lindisfarne, the offspring of Iona, was justly famed for the piety and learning of its monks. Nor should the personality of Bishop Aidan be overlooked. He was a man of singular meekness, piety, and moderation, industrious in keeping and teaching the heavenly commandments, diligent in reading; he reproved with priestly authority the naughty and powerful; he tenderly comforted the sorrowful, and defended the poor. He won the affection of all with whom he was associated. His noble
character must be considered as one reason for the rapid growth of the Celtic form of Christianity.

The fatal weakness of the Irish Church, however, lay just where Roman Christianity displayed its greatest strength, as a comparison of the two will show.

Unlike the Irish monks, the papal missionaries were far from their homes, and it took weeks for a messenger to go to Rome and return. Though these difficulties did not prevent constant intercourse with the continent, it made it less effective than it might otherwise have been. Gaul, with its monasteries, was near, to be sure; and from Gaul supplies and more workers could and did often come. Yet Gaul was largely under the influence of the monks of Luxeuil, and therefore the Saxons who resorted thither for study were as likely as not to learn the Celtic form of Christianity and thus strengthen the Irish Church. In three respects, however, the Catholic party was the stronger. The earliest converts of the Roman priests were largely men of position and influence, who could bring with them into the Church great numbers of subjects and who could give both lands and protection to the clergy. The Anglo-Saxons were anxious to attain the dignity of the priesthood, and since the Romans were not jealous of them, but only of the Scottish missionaries, a native priesthood soon grew up,—pupils of the Roman clergy. Furthermore, while the Irish Church had no organization and acknowledged no head, the Roman Church in England was a branch of the all-embracing universal Catholic Church, the most completely organized institution of the Middle Ages. These three reasons are sufficient to account for the final success of the Catholic faith.

The rivalry between the two parties manifested itself repeatedly in various places and in connection with various matters.
Ostensibly the differences were about certain religious formalities, chief of which were the tonsure, the date of Easter, and the recognition of the Roman hierarchy. In reality they were deeper. The Irish Church wanted to maintain its independence in intellectual and spiritual matters. Its scholars were less ready than those of other mediaeval nations to accept prescribed dogmas without question. The Roman party, on the other hand, were seeking 'ritual, refinement, and union with Rome'.

The observance of ritual was in itself a taming process and a lesson in submission to law. Added to that was the influence of the strict Benedictine Rule in the monasteries, whereby obedience is made a cardinal virtue and the welfare of the individual is absolutely subordinated to the good of the community. Thus a useful check was put upon the overgrowth of individualism in the Saxon, and he was brought to have some conception of a universal law. Union with the Roman Church was probably the only effective way in which these fierce barbarians could have been kept under the influence of civilization. Then again, had it not been for the success of Augustine's mission, whatever culture the British Islands might have developed, they yet would have remained in a sort of isolation, never entering with the other nations into the full enjoyment of the classic heritage. Bits of literature, fragments of law,—these might come in other ways; but only through contact with the countries of the Mediterranean Basin could England come wholly under the spell of Rome and absorb all that was good in the civilization of the past. Progress means continuity, and that came through the Roman Church. It is well for England and the world that the strife left the monks from the South victorious.

The final rupture between the two Churches occurred in 664. The Synod of Whitby was called by King Oswy to settle the con-

Eckstein p. 91.
Controversy about the date of Easter. After an able debate between the representatives of both parties, the decision was pronounced in favor of Rome. In 714 Iona itself adopted the Roman usages, and eventually even the most remote churches of Wales and Ireland yielded to the dominant influence of the Catholic Church. The controversy was ended. A united Church could now undertake anew its mission as the standard-bearer in the march of civilization.

In England more than elsewhere, the Church was the leader in the progress of education. In general the English monastery schools were smaller than the vast assemblages of Clonmacnois and Bangor. Those which owed their origin to the Celtic monks were usually mission posts, like that at Melrose in which St. Cuthbert was a pupil. The Roman schools, really a part of the Benedictine monasteries, had a better organization. One fact thrusts itself upon the attention of even a cursory reader,—namely, that here in the schools of Saxon England women teachers were in positions of the highest honor; for numbers of the greatest monasteries were double, like the early foundation of Brigit at Kildare, and presided over by abbesses who discovered it a task demanding wonderful judgment, tact, and love for humanity to care for the souls and bodies of persons of all ages and both sexes, and to be mother and teacher to the little pupils who were both the trial and the joy of the saintly nuns. Ely, Repton, Coldingham, and Whitby are names that call to mind the devotion and the executive ability of these English women.

The monastery schools, like the political power, centred in three regions,—Southern England, Mercia, and Northumbria.

In the South, education looks for its origin to Canterbury, where were two monasteries established by Augustine himself. Canterbury was most illustrious under the arch-bishop Theodore, a Greek of Tarsus. With him came Adrian, whom Theodore put in
Bede
Bk.IV.
ch.2.

Drake
p.68

charge of the school. "And they gathered a crowd of disciples, and there daily flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers." Bede's enthusiasm is contagious. Who will deny that it was glorious to study under such masters? Benedict Biscop, himself a far-traveler and a celebrated scholar, preferred the learner's seat to the teacher's chair, and for two years was a diligent student under the men whom he sincerely admired. St. John of Beverley, who is said to have been the first master of liberal arts of Oxford University, was a pupil there. Not the least noted of the Canterbury students was Aldhelm, who had previously studied at the school of Malmesbury, founded by Maidulf, the Irishman. Aldhelm found his studies arduous. In a very modern fashion he makes them the excuse for not visiting his relatives at Christmas time. Yet he loved his books, and evidently his industry was rewarded. He became abbot of Malmesbury, and was honored with the bishopric of Sherborn. He has the distinction also of being the first Englishman who successfully studied the classic learning. If one were to arrange chronologically a library representing English authors, Aldhelm's works would head the list; they are curious fragments, but without them English literature would have had a later beginning. Glastonbury, a monastery of the early Britons, which had fallen into ruins, was restored by King Ina upon the advice of Aldhelm. The abbey of Malmesbury was his especial pride; it was beautified with fine buildings and thronged with students and monks.

London, Winchester, Dorchester, Barking, and Rochester are other seats of learning in Southern England which would deserve mention if there were time for details. But Mercia, though late in accepting Christian culture, developed it rapidly when once it was established; and the Mercian schools next claim attention.
In the Mercian midlands were Repton, Worcester, Evesham, Ely, and Peterborough. Repton, although it was in charge of an abbess, was the school selected by the renowned Guthlac for his education. Ely was another of the foundations made by women. Queen Etheltrida of Northumbria, having gained the reluctant permission of her husband to withdraw from the world, settled in the fen lands, and proceeded to organize a community. The monks of Ely cheerfully set about the business of reclaiming the fens,—a very proper occupation for the Benedictine monks.

The Northumbrian king was not pleased to have his wife become a nun. Indeed, so many princesses and noble ladies chose to abandon their husbands in order to follow a religious life that the Church was at times not at all popular with the northern thanes. In spite of the occasional opposition, however, Northumbria was filled with monastery schools, and developed a characteristic and original literature. Lindisfarne had been the source of its conversion, but, after the Scots withdrew, it was eclipsed by other greater monasteries.

Coldingham, Hartlepool, and Whitby were under the rule of women. Hilda, formerly Abbess of Hartlepool, had been put in charge of the greater abbey of Whitby, and in her care was Aelfled, the daughter of King Oswy, dedicated to God as a thank-offering for a victory over Penda. At Hartlepool Hilda had learned much from Aidan, her friend and frequent visitor. At Whitby "even kings and princes asked and received her advice". Five bishops in Bede's time came from the school of Whitby, which was long an educational center of the highest order. Were no other names associated with it, that of Caedmon alone would give it undying fame. Although he was an unlettered layman, Abbess Hilda received him into the brotherhood of her monks because God had given to him the heavenly grace of poetry.
Several of the most important churches and monasteries of the North are connected with Wilfrid, the native priest who defended the authority of St. Peter at the Synod of Whitby. He was a thane's son at the court of King Oswy. The Queen sent him to Lindisfarne to be educated. Later he went to Canterbury, whence the King of Kent sent him and Benedict Biscop to Gaul. Having gone from there to Rome he received the tonsure of a Catholic monk. Thenceforth he spent a stormy life in maintaining the supremacy of the Roman Church. His energy took a practical rather than a scholarly direction. As Archbishop of York he built several fine churches; the one at York had a roof of lead, and glass windows "so that the dirty birds could no longer fly in and out". He quarreled with Theodore of Canterbury and was imprisoned. On his release he went to Sussex and converted the pirates there, incidentally teaching them some useful arts. After various vicissitudes of fortune due to his part in the contest between the rival Churches, he finally returned, not to York, but to Hexham and Ripon, and retained those bishoprics until his death.

It is a pleasure to turn from the turbulent Wilfrid to the comrade who had been sent with him to Gaul on his first journey abroad, the scholarly Benedict Biscop. Biscop, a thane of King Egfrid, became a monk and travelled much in pursuit of knowledge. He built the twin monasteries of Peter and Paul at Wearmouth and Jarrow, and brought to their libraries treasures of literature and art. For his building he imported masons and glaziers from Gaul. Besides, he brought to Wearmouth the chief singer of St. Peter's at Rome, who taught the Gregorian chanting to the monks there, so that worshipers came thither from far and wide to attend the services.

To the school at Wearmouth came a sweet-voiced, sweet-faced child of seven years, Bede, who, as he grew older, loved his books
and with eagerness drank in all the knowledge made available by 
Benedict's fine libraries. Bede had no worldly ambition. He 
declined to accept an abbacy, because "the office demands house-
hold care, and household care brings with it distraction of mind, 
which hinders the pursuit of learning". Pope Sergius wrote to 
Abbot Ceolfrid, requesting that Bede, whose fame had spread widely, 
be sent to Rome; but, fortunately for Bede's own peace of mind, 
Sergius soon died and the scholar was left undisturbed in the 
work he loved. Of himself he writes, "Amidst the observance of 
regular discipline, and the daily care of singing in the church, 
I always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing." His 
numerous productions show his erudition; among them are his 
Ecclesiastical History of England, many commentaries on the Bible, 
Lives of the Saints, a martyrology, and a book of hymns. His 
history is one of the principal sources of modern historians; for 
he tells where he gets his material, and though he relates im-
possible miracles with simple credulity, he also copies letters 
and other authentic documents, and gets the testimony of eye-
witnesses as far as possible. As a teacher he displayed the same 
sincerity of purpose, and his personality won the abiding love of 
his pupils. One of them, Cuthbert, wrote a letter describing the 
death of his dear master, which is one of the most charming and 
best deserved eulogies ever written. During the last few days of 
his life Bede hastened to finish an Anglo-Saxon copy of the Gospel 
of St. John and another book which he had begun. When his com-
rades would have urged him not to use his waning strength he said, 
"I don't want my boys to read a lie, or to work to no purpose after 
I am gone." He died in the year 735. There is a legend that the 
inscription upon his tomb was written by an angel and a boy who 
loved him. The pupil who had been chosen to write his epitaph fell 
asleep at his task while the line, unfinished, read
"Hac sunt in fossa, Bedae ossa."

An angel with a pencil of light bent above the sleeping lad and wrote. When the boy woke, he read the completed verse, "Hac sunt in fossa, Bedae Venerabilis ossa."

And by the angel's name, the Venerable Bede, the great teacher will always be known.

Egbert had become Archbishop of York shortly before Bede's death. Bede had written him a letter on the duties of the office, and, partly no doubt under its inspiration, Egbert founded an excellent school, which became the beacon light for all western Europe in the eighth century; for from the school of York went Alcuin to rekindle in Gaul the love of learning that Bede and his countrymen had not permitted to become extinct in England.

Indeed very many men and women from England were to be found on the continent for one purpose or another during the seventh and eighth centuries.

One of the motives which led them abroad was missionary zeal. Though their work was later than that of the Irish missionaries, it was no less important. The greatest of the English missionaries was Boniface. The history of his work is of interest in a study of Anglo-Saxon education because it enables one to judge of the progress learning in England had already made. In the early part of the seventh century Anglo-Saxon nuns had come in numbers to the monasteries of Gaul for protection and education. After the general conversion of England they had been able to find as good advantages at home as abroad. Now, at the call of Boniface, many came from the English nunneries to direct his religious houses in northern Europe. One Anglo-Saxon nun, Liota, of Bischofsheim,
remarkably successful, and her pupils were in great demand as teachers.

Business and pleasure also were as potent as religion in promoting foreign intercourse. The rich often made long journeys for one or the other of these causes, and probably enjoyed their adventures and added to their knowledge as much as a man of to-day does by going on a tour of the world. The record of one of these journeys is extant, written by an English nun of Heidenheim, a kinswoman of the family whose experiences she relates. All such intercommunication among different countries was a means of education. If the common saying that the "grand tour" is better than a college course be true now, it was doubly true then, when the world beyond one's own immediate vicinity was so little known.

Another class who went abroad were the scholars. Here again England parallels Ireland. Alcuin, whose training was partly in Ireland, but chiefly at York, and who had been the librarian of York School, was asked to become Charlemagne's Minister of Public Education,—if such a term had been invented by which to designate the position,—and accepted the invitation willingly. He took with him several of his pupils from York, and systematized education in Charlemagne's empire in a very thorough fashion. Though Alcuin himself was not so great intellectually as Bede or Erigena, yet his work was of inestimable value. He had a remarkable talent for digesting and classifying material, and he set the monks at work revising and copying the manuscripts, which had become very corrupt through the ignorance or carelessness of successive scribes. Alcuin's learning and Charlemagne's extraordinary executive ability raised systematic education to a point it never had reached before; and though a period of decline followed, their influence was never entirely destroyed.
The work of Alcuin abroad reacted upon England through the pupils whom he trained in France and sent back to England to teach; and perhaps the English schools might soon have ranked as high as those of Charlemagne if they had been left to develop in peace. But the British Islands had even then seen the beginning of events that were to mark a new and discouraging period in their history.

Education had probably made more rapid progress in the British Islands between the fourth and eighth centuries than anywhere else in the same period. In England there had been no foundation to build upon—the whole work was the creation of the Christian monks. In Ireland conditions had been little, if any, better. And what a wondrous structure had been raised! "The island of saints and scholars" had carried its culture to the remote corners of Europe. England, in scarce two hundred years, had risen from barbarism to be the chief centre of learning.

It is true, however, that late in the eighth century intellectual progress showed signs of decay, or at least of arrested development. In Northumbria, where for a century at least a native poetry and prose had flourished, original literary productivity had practically ceased. English scholars were busied chiefly with putting into serviceable form the books they already had, rather than with literary creation. In Ireland also the ardor which Columcille had manifested, though it was by no means dead, was no longer at white heat. The spiritual life as well as the intellectual seemed to lack something of its early fervor.

But though intellectual development had suffered a temporary check, and religion seemed less vital to the souls of men than it had when taught by its first preachers with all their enthusiasm, neither in religion nor in learning was the life force sapped, and
both would undoubtedly have revived again in all their pristine vigor if another wave of barbarism had not threatened their very existence.

"From the fury of the Norsemen, good lord, deliver us!" rose the cry of the Christians to their God, and He in His Wisdom tried their souls before He answered their prayer.

Around the northern coast of Scotland came the Vikings—the creek-men, swooping down upon the Irish coasts, and making their way inland by means of the rivers. Beg-Erin was one of the first monasteries to suffer from their raids (819), but by no means the last. They came, like their kinsmen on the continent, seeking homes as well as booty, and they established Dublin, Limerick, Waterford and Wexford within fifty years after their arrival. The Danes followed them. It was then that "almost all Ireland went over to the continent". From France the monks learned to build the round towers, the ruins of which may be seen in various parts of Ireland, to protect themselves and their most precious treasures against the Danes.

After a time the Norsemen and the Danes who settled in Ireland united to establish and use commercial centres. But their work in favor of civilization was slight compared to the devastation that followed in their wake. Terror filled the land. If thousands of the Danes were killed in a battle, twice as many thousands came at once to replace them. The monasteries were wealthy; therefore the monasteries were plundered and burned. Glendalough was destroyed five times in thirty years; Clonfert was burnt again and again. Scarcely one of the scores of religious houses which had grown up in Ireland escaped. Innis-fallen, which was practically inaccessible to invaders who depended on the water-ways, was looked upon as a paradise because it offered secure sanctuary.
It was a sorry time for education. The monks were slain by hundreds, their homes destroyed, and their books, stripped of the gold and jewels with which many of them were adorned, were "drowned" in the nearest body of water. In Erin "it was not allowed to give instruction in letters. No scholars, no clerics, no books, no holy relics, were left in church or monastery through dread of them [the Danes]. Neither bard nor philosopher nor musician pursued his wonted profession in the land." Thus the glory of Erin's learning was dimmed, not to shine forth again until Brian Boru, at the beginning of the eleventh century, sent men "to buy books, beyond the sea and the great ocean. and Brian himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to every one separately who went on this service."

Britain suffered no less than Ireland. Lying nearer the mainland, it was a tempting prey to the freebooters who came by the Channel from Denmark, or by the North Sea from Scandinavia.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, under the date of 787, has this significant entry: "In his [King Bertric's] days first came three ships of Northmen out of Denmark. And then the reve rode to the place, and would have driven them to the king's town, because he knew not who they were; and they there slew him. These were the first ships of Danishmen which sought the land of the English nation." For twenty years they raided the country annually. Then they came in regular campaigns of conquering armies, and began to make settlements. In all quarters at once they made their attacks. Little by little the English were forced to yield. The monasteries were no longer safe. Death, slavery, or exile seemed to be all that fate held in store for the unlucky Saxons. Culture
died with the destruction of the monasteries.

But hope was not yet destroyed. Alfred, the West-Saxon king, though at one time so reduced in power that he fled for refuge to Athelney, a hillock rising from treacherous morass, nevertheless would not abandon his kingdom. He quietly gathered his forces, defeated the Danes, and made a treaty with their King, whereby the latter agreed to accept Christianity. Then Alfred turned his attention to the restoration of his kingdom.

When he had secured half of England by the treaty of Wedmore, and was ready to set about the work of reconstruction, he found himself confronted with almost insuperable difficulties. Ruler of different tribes who lived under different laws, he had to begin that process of amalgamation by which Britons, Angles, Saxons, Danes, have united to form the English race, and to bring his people into touch with the outside world. The latter purpose he accomplished by sending embassies to Rome, to India, to Jerusalem; by ennobling a merchant who made three voyages to the Mediterranean; by encouraging the voyages of discoverers; by marriage alliance with a foreign land; and by establishing schools under foreign teachers. The former object was brought about by a wise policy of toleration and justice. He revised the laws, with the advice of his Witan, adding little of his own, and basing the laws of each tribe on their own existing customs. The "dooms" he prepared with the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, pointing thus to Divine Law as the basis of all law.

One of Alfred's fondest dreams was a system of universal education. "My desire," said he, "is that all the freeborn youths of my people may persevere in learning until they can perfectly read the English Scriptures." This dream he did not see realized.
Nevertheless, he did much, very much, to promote the cause of education. Asser, Alfred's biographer, tells how bitterly the King grieved over his own lack of opportunities. He could not learn the liberal arts because "there were no good readers at that time in all the kingdom of the West-Saxons. This he confessed, with many lamentations and sighs, to have been one of his greatest difficulties and impediments in this life,—namely, that when he was young and had the capacity for learning, he could not find teachers." No longer could culture be looked for in the Church. Indeed, he says that when he began to reign not one south of the Thames could understand the Divine Service, or explain a Latin letter in English. Conditions were little better in other parts of England. The bitter years of the Danish invasions had nearly destroyed both learning and religion. Alfred began his work of restoring education through the revival of the monasteries. To help him he called scholars from outside his realms, -- Plegmund and Werefrith from Mercia, Grimbold from Gaul, John of Corbei from Saxony, and Asser from Wales. He established monasteries at Shaftesbury and Athelney, and since his own people had lost their zeal for monastic life, he also brought youths from the continent as a nucleus of the student body. Shaftesbury, a convent for women, was put in charge of his own daughter, Ethelgiva. Books as well as teachers and buildings had to be procured. The best libraries had been in Northumbria, but had fallen before the ravages of the Danes. Alfred welcomed the Northumbrian monks who fled to Wessex, and rejoiced if they perchance could give him a manuscript saved from the pillage. Besides, he made the books more accessible by translating them into the West-Saxon dialect.

Winchester was the educational centre of the King. The great
school there under Grimbald may be compared to the Palace School of Charlemagne under Alcuin. The King insisted that his nobles must study or resign their offices. His youngest son, Ethelweard, and the children of almost all the nobility, with many who were not noble, were consigned to the schools of learning, and prospered under the diligent care of their teachers. Sons of bishops, earls, nobles, Alfred's ministers and friends, he had instructed "in all kinds of good morals, and taught them letters night and day." The Latin language as well as the vernacular was taught, and all the pupils learned to write, and received some instruction in the liberal arts. One of Alfred's laws required that every freeman owning two hides of land should keep his son at school until the boy was fifteen years old, - a regulation which is suggestive of the modern compulsory education laws. While the parents who could afford it were evidently expected to help support the schools, Alfred himself gave generously to their maintenance. One-eighth of his income went directly for the support of his school, and a quarter of it was given to the monasteries, where indirectly it would further the cause of learning.

It was no slight impetus that Alfred the King gave to intellectual training. In his character of Scholar he accomplished as much more. The story of how he earned his first book is characteristic, even if of doubtful authenticity. His stepmother, Judith, daughter of the Emperor Charles the Bald, showed to her boys an illuminated Saxon manuscript and offered to give it to the one who could first learn to read it. Attracted by the beautifully colored initial letter, Alfred took the book to his master, and, returning in a short time, read it and claimed the reward. From that inci-
dent dated his taste for books. He learned to write, and carried
a note-book in which he methodically jotted down whatever interested
him,- a quotation, an anecdote, a bit of current news, and most of
all the passages of scripture which gave him especial pleasure.

The scarcity of books was a hindrance to any general learning.
Here Alfred met the difficulty by becoming a translator. For the
welfare of the people he put into the vernacular four books which
covered a comprehensive range of subjects. One was Boethius's
Consolations of Philosophy; and a second, Pope Gregory's Pastoral
Rule, of which the first chapter says, "Unlearned men are not to
presume to undertake teaching", and which Alfred sent in translation
to his bishops, maybe as a gentle hint, since "some of them needed
it, who knew but little Latin". He also translated Gregory's
Dialogues. A third translation was Bede's history, of interest to
all Englishmen. The fourth was Orosius's geography, which he edited
and enlarged, adding much new and valuable matter.

Besides the translations, Alfred is credited with being the
author of a book of Proverbs, a treatise on falconry, his own will,
and some fragments. And not the least of his works was the Anglo-
Saxon Chronicle, compiled under his direction and of inestimable value
to students of early English history.

All in all, there is no character in the history of the world who
more truly deserves the title of the Great than does Alfred of England.
Alfred Austin, the poet-laureate, in anticipation of the millennial
anniversary of his death in 901, commemorates him in a poem called
The Spotless King, from which the following stanzas are quoted:

"Star of the spotless fame, from far-off skies
Teaching this truth, too long not understood,
That only they are worthy who are wise,
And none are truly great that are not good."
Of valour, virtue, letters, learning, law,
Pattern and prince, his name will now abide,
Long as of conscience Rulers live in awe,
And love of country is their only pride."

"With the death of Alfred the period under consideration ends.
Into the midst of barbarism Christianity had come, bringing with it
the best of the old culture, and building upon the speculative,
imaginative Celtic mind and the more slow and serious mind of the
Teutons no mean structure of intellectual and practical education.
In Ireland both lay and monastery schools had flourished, but both,
after the fourth century, under the influence of Christianity. In
England education was wholly in connection with the Church, and King
Alfred knew no other medium than the Church through which to do his
work. Wales, whose monasteries had been the centre from which
Ireland and Scotland first derived their Christian faith, had received
a check by the Saxon invasion from which it took generations to
recover; yet it was a part of Christendom. Scotland had fallen under
the influence of the Irish Church, and through the efforts of the
missionaries from Iona, added to those of the early Welsh missionaries
had become a Christian country. England and Ireland, filled with
schools wherein the best education of the time was offered, had
sent their teachers far and wide. When the Norsemen ravaged the
land and culture could no more dwell in safety in the British
Islands, it had taken refuge under the more secure protection of
the Carolingians, thence to return to its native home at the summons
of Alfred, Scholar and King.

Many names have been set forth in these pages,—names that have
a meaning not merely in the history of education, but in the history
of European civilization. Education had a home in the great schools,
such as Bangor, Clonmacnois, Iona, Canterbury, Whitby, and Jarrow; it had its leaders in such men and women as Columba, Theodore, Aidan, Cadoc, Brigit, and Hilda. The land and the leaders are known. What of the rank and file of the armies by which heathenism and ignorance were routed? For, after all, the history of any movement must not concern itself altogether with the leaders. Without the common soldiers who obey and follow, good generalship counts for nothing. How did the students in these schools live? What studies did they pursue? By what methods were they taught? How much do the promoters of modern school systems and the culture of the present day owe to these predecessors who lived in the darkness of an age of transition, when the old had passed away and the new was as yet in process of formation?

To questions such as these no absolute, definite, conclusive answers can be given. There are no documents which show a carefully arranged course of study, under teachers trained in normal schools; the monasteries where the schools were carried on are heaps of ruins or have disappeared altogether without leaving even a trace. Still, the books that were made and used have not all perished; incidental information comes from many sources; and the Benedictine Rule, under which the monasteries of the Catholic Church, though not those of the Celtic church, were governed, is of service in the attempt to reconstruct the student life of those early centuries.

Not much material is available in regard to the schools of the Celtic bards. The requirements for the highest degree (that of ollamh) conferred by the pre-Christian schools have been already stated. Under Christianity the schools continued to exist, with endowed lands. Very likely many of the bardic schools retained their peripatetic character. Theology was a part of the curriculum
of the lay schools; for in theological studies the medieval taste for philosophy found vent. The oscan laws carefully regulated the mutual obligations of teacher and pupil. The teacher must furnish the pupil with his living. The food must be sufficient, but graded according to the rank of the pupil; the porridge of a common man's son, for instance, was flavored with salt butter, while that of a prince was sweetened with honey. Corporal punishment was not forbidden. If the teacher received pay from a pupil who came from outside the province he became responsible for his conduct; but if he taught the stranger for the love of God and not for gain he was not accountable for his pupil's crimes. The pupil on his part was bound to provide for the old age of his tutor, to give him "the gains of his art" while learning and his first profit after finishing his education. In the large lay schools there were six grades of instructors; those of the lowest grade had only to chant the Psalms; those of the fourth grade taught grammar and mathematics; those of the fifth were professors of divinity; the drumchli, or chief head, had to know all branches of learning. The branches taught did not differ materially from those of the religious schools, but the purpose of the lay schools was to train pupils for the learned professions rather than to make clerics or monks of them.

The professors of the lay schools, having arrogated to themselves too many privileges, incurred the wrath of king and people, and the bardic order might have been abolished by the Council of Drumceat in 575 if St. Columba had not come from Iona to defend them. As it was, laws were passed by which abuses were to be corrected and the bardic schools put under the supervision of responsible chief poets.

The monastery schools of Ireland were different from those in
the Benedictine houses; and before leaving Irish schools to turn to those great communities which stood in the fairest spots of England and the continent, one might glance at what is known of student life in the Celtic monasteries.

There were no great common dormitories, lecture halls, and refectories in the Irish schools. Each pupil built for himself a little hut of withes, clay, or rarely of stone; these dwellings were usually of conical shape like a beehive, scarcely high enough for one to stand erect in them, lighted only by the door, and unfurnished save for a pallet and perhaps a stone or stump for a chair. The huts were grouped around a little church, and generally the whole settlement was protected by some sort of wall and ditch.

Though some occupations were carried on upon the estate with which the monastery was endowed, and also the people were expected to offer first-fruits to the Church, yet the pupils depended mostly upon the generosity of the natives for their support, and did not hesitate to beg from door to door. Among the stories illustrative of the times is the following: Adamnan (who later became the successor and biographer of St. Columba) was one day carrying a jug of milk when Finnachta's cavalcade dashed down the road. In trying to get out of the way the poor fellow spilt the milk and broke the jar. "And reason enough have I to be sad," said he; "for there are two of us always going about to get food for the five good school-boys who live in one house." To complete the adventure in proper fashion Finnachta took the boys and their teacher to his own house and entertained them there for an indefinite while in true princely manner. Students from all countries came to Erin, for it was the only peaceful land in the midst of the barbarian invasions, and all comers were treated with hospitality. Some of the schools were so
thronged with foreigners that special quarters were assigned
to the different races. The teachers lectured in the open air,
and the students went home to their little huts, and there, using
their knees for a library table, they coned their lecture notes
or made the wonderful Irish manuscripts which cannot be surpassed
the world over for beauty in design and execution.

The quality of scholarship in the Irish schools was exceptionally
high, and it raised the level of knowledge all over Europe. The
Benedictine monasteries, however, came to be the prevailing means
by which education was spread over Christendom. They were superior
to the Irish schools in the system and the permanency of their
organization. Since the Rule of St. Benedict prescribed that each
monk should read two hours a day, and that one should read aloud
during the meal hour, every monastery was a school in which book-
lore was taught to the monks themselves. Besides, schools were
established in the monasteries which the children of the neighbor-
hood might attend, as well as children sent from a distance to be
under the constant care of the monks. Most of these students were
destined for a religious life, for only men of vision like Charle-
magne and Alfred had any conception of such a thing as public
education. Still, such secular education as did exist was also
under the direction of the Church. Possibly the parish priests
even in this early period gave a little elementary instruction;
probably in the households of the bishops young men were trained
for positions in the Church; certainly the monasteries did by far
the greatest part of the work of education.

The particular activities and equipment of the class-room can
best be discussed after the every-day life of the pupils in the
monastic schools has been described.

The buildings of the monastery included a church, a common
dormitory, a dining-room, a chapter-house, and a scriptorium, besides the kitchens, store-rooms, and work-rooms necessary for a great establishment. These buildings protected a quadrangle, or cloister, in which the monks taught and worked.

Religious services in the church were held several times during the day and night, and whoever was tardy or made a mistake in the oratory was punished. Certain hours of each day were devoted to manual labor and to reading. The domestic duties were performed by the monks in turn. The food was not over-abundant, although quite likely it was better than the poorer classes usually provided for themselves. All property was held in common, and from the common store each monk was supplied with what he needed, including writing materials. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, as well as learning, centered in the monasteries.

Children under fifteen years of age were under the custody of any one of the monks, and could be chastised by him upon occasion. Whipping and depriving of meals (like sending to bed without supper) were common methods of punishing the children, and might be applied also to the monks themselves. More commonly a monk, if guilty of misdemeanors, was forbidden to associate with his comrades for a time. Sometimes work in the scriptorium was imposed as a penance, -- and, since the room was likely to be very imperfectly heated, and the furniture neither comfortable nor convenient, the work of writing might have been somewhat of an affliction.

However, agreeable or not, copying books was one of the most necessary and important tasks of the monks. Usually each monk worked by himself, but Alcuin is said to have introduced the custom of having several copies at once made from dictation. The
boys in the school were sometimes called upon to help make copies, under the supervision of the armarius, or librarian.

The life of the cenobites was not devoid of pleasure. Singing was a duty and a pastime. That amusements were sometimes imported from the outside world is indicated by the proceedings of the Council of Cloveshove, which urged upon abbots and abbesses the necessity of preserving in the schools a love of study, and not permitting strolling poets, buffoons, or musicians to enter the cloisters.

With congenial companionship, enough to eat and to wear, occupation adapted to one's taste, and constant instruction under excellent teachers, life in the monasteries was tolerable even to those who were not studiously inclined, and to the man who loved his books it was delightful. What wonder that kings and nobles gave up their titles and estates for the monkish gown and cowl?

The religious life attracted women as well as men, and perhaps even more strongly. To the woman the monastery gave more freedom than life in the world did, for social freedom and political and economic equality between the sexes, even yet not a fully accomplished fact, was not so much as a prophecy in the ninth century. The lady abbess, however, often presided over a double religious house and was a person of authority and influence. In the genealogies of the royal families of Anglo-Saxon England Montalembert lists over thirty women who became nuns, and most of them abbesses. Yet the monasteries were democratic, and the girl of humble origin, even the slave, might in the Church, and only in the Church, rise to a position of importance. Therefore the nunneries drew the ambitious as well as the religious maidens of all classes to a life within their walls.

The life of the women in the convent schools was much like
that of the men, except that, naturally, needlework and household arts took the place of agriculture and similar occupations, and the care of orphan children was a duty that the nunneries often assumed. Lioba made it a rule that her nuns should rest after dinner, since she knew that the mind would be keener for study after sleep. Women were even better copyists than the men, and made some beautiful manuscripts with gold lettering. They also painted miniatures, and spun, wove, and embroidered altar cloths and vestments for the service of the church.

The women were not immured entirely from the world on taking the veil. Pilgrimages were frequent, and St. Boniface warned Cuthbert of Canterbury that it would be a good thing if the synod would forbid nuns to travel and stay abroad, as they were in the habit of doing. Neither did a girl on becoming a nun renounce pretty clothes and ornaments. A contemporary thus describes the dress of the nuns of the eighth century: "A vest of fine linen of a violet color is worn, above it a scarlet tunic with a hood, sleeves striped with silk and trimmed with red fur; the locks on the forehead and the temples are curled with a crisping iron, the dark head-veil is given up for white and colored head-dresses which, with bows of ribbon sewn on, reach down to the ground; the nails, like those of a falcon or sparrow hawk, are pared to resemble talons." The monk who thus observed in detail the dress of the nuns of his day was terribly scandalized, to be sure!

Even Bede, the kind and tolerant, complained that the virgins of Coldingham, whenever they had leisure, spent all their time in weaving fine garments with which to adorn themselves like brides.

Such criticisms from the pious brothers are evidence that dress-making and all its attendant occupations were skilfully taught in the nunneries, as they are now in the schools of practical arts.

As for the scholastic pursuits of the women, probably the convent curriculum was as liberal as that of the monasteries, and 'embraced
all available writing, sacred or profane. Not the least important part of the nun's training came through her intimate association with high-born women, from whom she might learn womanly graces and social ease and courtesy. To have been educated in a nunnery was in itself a mark of aristocracy, so successful did the training prove to be.

What besides manners, morality, and practical arts did the monastic schools teach? Books were, and still are, the principal tools of the teacher. What tools did the monks have, and how did they use them?

The curriculum consisted mainly of "the Seven Liberal Arts", a condensation and crystallization of knowledge handed down from the classic period to the Middle Ages. Paul Abelson's book, The Seven Liberal Arts, is the main authority from which the following description of the subjects of study is taken. The course of study was inherited from the Greek culture, transmitted and modified by the Latin, influenced by Christianity, and fixed by Cassiodorus and Augustine in the mediaeval curriculum, and there maintained for nine hundred years. The seven arts fell into two groups, the trivium and quadrivium, as they were called. The first dealt with language and literature, and included grammar, rhetoric, and logic. The second group included four mathematical subjects, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

Grammar was of course Latin grammar, and might more properly be called language and literature. Latin was the universal language of scholars, and since Latin text-books were used and lectures on all subjects given in Latin, every pupil had to have an actual working knowledge of it. Besides, the boy read and perhaps learned to appreciate some of the best Latin classics. Virgil was especially the favorite of the middle ages. Rhetoric was not considered a very valuable study because there was not much need of training
orators, which had been its chief purpose in the days of Cicero. In the ninth century a practical application of it was made in writing letters and formal documents. The third subject of the group, logic, was not philosophy, but a technical, formal system of dialectics. Rabanus found the syllogism useful in combatting heresy; Erigena, the forerunner of the scholastics, was the first to connect logic and philosophy.

Arithmetic came first in the mathematical branches. Arithmetic in the Middle Ages, however, was not much like the subject as taught to-day. Its practical use was in the computation of Easter. Theoretically, it was made the basis for much superstitious speculation about the properties of numbers. It was not a popular subject,—and no wonder, for the Arabic notation was unknown, and the Roman numerals were cumbersome and hard to manage. If the sums could be done mentally, or reckoned on the fingers,—well and good. If they had to be written down, they were enough to discourage anybody. A simple process like multiplying 235 by 4 became, when written out, this complicated affair:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
3C \times IV = DCXX \\
XXX \times IV = 0 XX \\
V \times IV = XX \\
\hline
DCXXC X
\end{array}
\]

Bede's work, De Temporum Ratione, was the first book on practical computation.

Geometry comprised a few definitions; the methods of computing the areas of the triangle, the quadrilateral, and the circle; and some geographical information. Euclid, with his abstract philosophy of mathematics which has been inflicted upon so many generations of unoffending children, was not the bugbear of the eighth century school.

The minimum of astronomy included the knowledge of the course of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the changes of
the seasons. The better schools taught the subject more fully. While the Easter question kept the Church divided, and while the hours were reckoned by the sun dial, astronomy was, as might be expected, a very popular subject.

Last in the quadrivium came music. As taught in the upper schools music was a purely theoretical study in the category of mathematics. It did not involve the art of music. The student need not be able to play an instrument or sing a note. Still, the best instruction was in schools where singing was taught in the elementary classes. Singing was studied for the church services only. Both the Irish and the English races were fond of music, however, and did not hesitate to use it for various purposes. Bishop Aldhelm sat on the bridge in the character of a gleeman, and played and sang songs in the vernacular, so that the people might listen to his sermon instead of going home immediately after mass. According to tradition, King Alfred was a harper, and used the disguise of a wandering minstrel to help him spy out the enemy's camp.

The Seven liberal Arts made up the regular course leading to the study of theology, philosophy, and law. Medicine was known to a certain degree, but the great schools of medicine developed at a later period and in another part of Europe.

Different schools added to this general curriculum or modified it as they had occasion. Many of the Irish schools, and, after Theodore of Tarsus became Archbishop of Canterbury, many in England also, taught Greek as well as Latin. In some few schools Hebrew must have been known. About the end of the seventh century a certain Irish student wrote a book comparing the Irish grammar with the Latin of Priscian and Donatus, and certain forms of declension and so forth with the Greek and the Hebrew. The
vernacular languages were not neglected, as the various works in Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon prove. Modern science was unknown. Pliny's works were used, but of scientific investigation there was practically nothing. Bede's works show some correct observation of natural phenomena; the average student, however, when confronted with some extraordinary phenomenon, made no attempt to explain it naturally, but promptly classified it as a miracle.

With these Seven Liberal Arts as a general requirement of their courses of study, and with such additions as each could make, the schools of Britain and Ireland received thousands of men and women and gave them a more thorough education than they could have received anywhere else in Western Europe.

Yet the scarcity of books and the necessity of giving instruction through the medium of a foreign language made the road to learning a hard path to travel. The first difficulty was partially obviated, however, by the work in the monastic scriptorium, where copies of the books needed for the Divine Service or for use in the class room could be multiplied by hand with a rapidity which seems incredible to the modern generation who depend upon the printing press with all its improvements for the production of their books. The text-books most in vogue were compendia of universal knowledge, such as those of Martianus Capella and Isidore of Seville; and books on grammar, twenty of which by different authors were to be found in the schools. Glossaries, arranged alphabetically or by subjects, were a requisite in every library. The ingenuity of the teachers themselves was taxed to compile text-books adapted to cope with the second difficulty. A Latin book suitable for a boy eleven or twelve years old and yet containing the rudiments of Latin did not exist among the books inherited from the classic age, for the very good reason that the Romans had had no use for such a book. It was left for the teacher
to make one; and scores were made, all which have certain common features, and which show the skill of the compiler in adapting Roman fables to mediaeval conditions.

Besides the text-books, many classics and books on theology were found in every good monastic library. Alcuin's poem on the library at York mentions, besides the usual books, many works of the Christian Fathers, books on natural history, and on canon law.

Books were usually made on parchment or vellum, rarely on paper, and were expensive. Monasteries lent manuscripts to be copied, usually demanding some security for the safe return of the precious manuscript.

The teacher read the lesson and explained it, or gave a lecture, while the pupils took notes, which they studied afterwards. The lesson was recited by formal question and answer, somewhat as the catechism is taught now in the Catholic schools. Alcuin recommended a system of departmental teaching, in which the classes should be separated, with a master over each.

To inspire the students with a liking for their lessons and to sharpen their wit, enigmas were often propounded. Ordinarily, however, the rod was used to stimulate the dull or inattentive pupil. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," said Paul; Aldhelm was directly in accordance with the spirit of his times when he interpreted the saying to mean, "If a father loves his son he thrashes him." Sometimes a teacher was sympathetic. St. Ængus once chanced upon a young truant, who could not or would not learn his lesson, and did not dare to face the abbot in class. The saint helped him with the lesson, and the boy went to class and recited perfectly, much to the abbot's astonishment. Apparently the abbot knew his pupils! Human nature will not down, and the children of the Middle Ages were human. The boys in the cloisters played pranks just like modern boys, making one another or even
the respected teacher himself the victim. Probably they played
the same pranks. The association of teacher and pupil was more
constant than it is in the public schools of to-day, and their
relationship more intimate. Despite the austerity of the masters,
the pupils regarded them with reverent affection, and they in
their turn exercised a watchful and tender care over their foster-
children.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and
that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no
new thing under the sun." Thus spake the Preacher. His words are
probably as true of education as of anything else.

"The thing that hath been is that which shall be." Thanks to
the schools of the Dark Ages, the word is true. The great heri-
tage from the Greek and the Roman had been, and is, and shall be.
But without the monasteries and their scribes, who can say what
treasures might have perished? All praise, then, to those who
built better than they knew, and who did not permit the glorious
literature of the past, pagan though it was, to be destroyed by
the all-conquering might of Christianity. Modified indeed and
overshadowed by Christian theology, both Greek and Latin classi-
cism, with what they in their turn had inherited from still older
cultures, were kept alive to spring forth again in beauty in the
age of the Renaissance. Other countries had some share in this great
service to mankind. Yet to the British Isles especially is the
credit due, because Ireland was long the only refuge of Greek
learning to be found in Western Europe, and because throughout
both Britain and Ireland pagan culture was broader and less bound
by the bigoted traditions of the Church than it was in Southern
Europe.

Nor is the preservation of the classical heritage the only
debt that to-day owes to that early yesterday. "That which is
done is that which shall be done." Supposing it is, still one does not sit with folded hands because the thing before him to be done has not the charm of novelty. The necessity of action is ever present. If one can do in a better or a different way what has been done before, he is serving humanity. Even if no actual progress were made, to escape retrogression is progress. It is said that the secret of civilization is growth combined with continuity. Continuity there was between the old and the new civilizations, preserved by the Church through the schools. There was also growth, not so rapid as in some other periods, yet considerable, in the little corner of the world which is under consideration.

It was worth while to develop the Anglo-Saxon from a barbarous dialect to a finished grammatical language, a fitting vehicle for a noble literature. That was the achievement of the monks in two hundred years. It was something to produce the mass of folk-lore, biography, and poetry in the Gaelic tongue which is only recently, through translations, being put into the storehouse of universal knowledge.

St. Wilfrid taught the men of Sussex, who were starving in the midst of plenty, to fish with nets off their own seacoast. St. Columba, by no miracle, though the ignorance of the time so named it, knew how to graft fruit-trees, to increase the herds, to find wells of water, to guard against epidemics of disease, to sail against the wind, and to interpret the signs of the weather. What he knew he probably taught. He had young men trained as blacksmiths and furnished ploughshares for the farmers. Either he or his successor obtained the passage of a law by which women and children were exempt from taking part in war.
Rightly does Columba rank among the greatest practical teachers of the world.

Music, both sacred and secular, thrived in Ireland and Scotland under the native bards; in England under the best instruction from Italy it was made a most attractive part of the church services. A characteristic art appeared in the illuminated manuscripts—perfect in coloring, exquisite in workmanship, original in design. The O's in The Book of Kells, to mention only one of scores of manuscripts, are comparable to Giotto's perfect circle; the quaint figures are a forerunner of the later architectural decorations; the coloring is the admiration and despair of modern artists.

Hede is an example of those writers who put into a form suited to the men of his time the knowledge of the past, enriched by his own original investigations. He also stands to modern history as Herodotus does to Greek history. As a scientist he taught the sphericity of the earth, the influence of the moon upon the tides, the cause of eclipses. Dicuil, the Irish geographer, was familiar with previous authorities; and from accounts given him by monks who had spent the summer in Iceland and the Faroe Islands, he wrote more accurately about the Arctic circle than had any one before him.

An inestimable benefit conferred upon civilization by the schools was the breaking up of tendencies to isolation. A record of the eighth century shows that Britons, Picts and Saxons, Gauls, Germans, Romans, and Egyptians, scholars or teachers in the peaceful land, were buried in Ireland. Pack and forth between the islands and the continent went scholars, architects, and craftsmen in the interests of the schools, increasing the sum of human
knowledge and the range of ambition.

All these were things done, facts accomplished, by the schools and the scholars of the British Islands before 900. Besides, there were certain tendencies, beginnings of things, -small seeds, as it were, which have grown and fruited in a later age. "There is nothing new under the sun."

The Celt taught Europe to rhyme. Saxon Caedmon transmitted his spirit to Milton. Brendan's voyages gave Fursey his visions, and Fursey's visions were known to Dante. The allegorical interpretations given in the mediaeval lecture halls blossomed into the poems of Spenser and the prose of Bunyan. This is merely a suggestion of the early influences which can be traced in modern literature.

In the same way, both the practical and the philosophical tendencies of to-day can be found in that earlier period. What are schools of practical arts and manual training but a modern application of the daily work in the monasteries? On the other hand, when the rest of the world was thundering dogma from pulpit and lecturer's desk, a certain speculative and broadminded spirit in the Irish treachers made them present to their students various possible interpretations of the texts,—tempting inducements to independent thought. Hence, Erigena connected philosophy and logic, and applied reason to theology. From him came scholasticism, harbinger of the Renaissance.

The most significant tendency of the times for the modern educator, however, was that indicated by the work of Charlemagne and Alfred. It was the conception of popular education, under the supervision of the State and supported by public funds. Alcuin's work is sometimes called 'premonitory.' But nothing springs into
being full-grown. Even though democracy and organization as educational principles were lost sight of after Alcuin's pupils and Alfred the King had gone, they were not lost. They were quiescent, only to revive again in a later day. What are the watchwords of education to-day? System, utility, universality,—the same ideal that was in the minds of the seers in the ninth century.

Only a very brief survey of education in the Christian centuries before 900 has been possible within the limits of this article. Great men, great deeds, great ambitions filled the lands, from Dover Straits to the Hebrides and from the North Sea to the Aran Islands. Humble service and deep sincerity were there as well, and love towards God and man. The more one knows of Cadoc, Lioba, Bede, and all the host who lived and taught in those wave-washed lands, the more pride will he take in bearing, even in a very humble capacity, the title of teacher.
Education in the British Islands from the Introduction of Christianity to the Death of Alfred the Great.

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Note.—In the following list of books those marked # I have read thoroughly and used constantly; those marked / I have read rapidly and not thoroughly; the others I have read carefully and used to some extent. The numbers of pages given are those that I have read.

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