WILLIAM GEORGE'S SONS

Laedyne, Dunutinga, Castlecum
p. 128. 'The Desert' in Lancashire
p. 129.

THE MAKING OF ENGLAND

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BY

JOHN RICHARD GREEN, M.A., LL.D.

HONORARY FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD

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4°
2°
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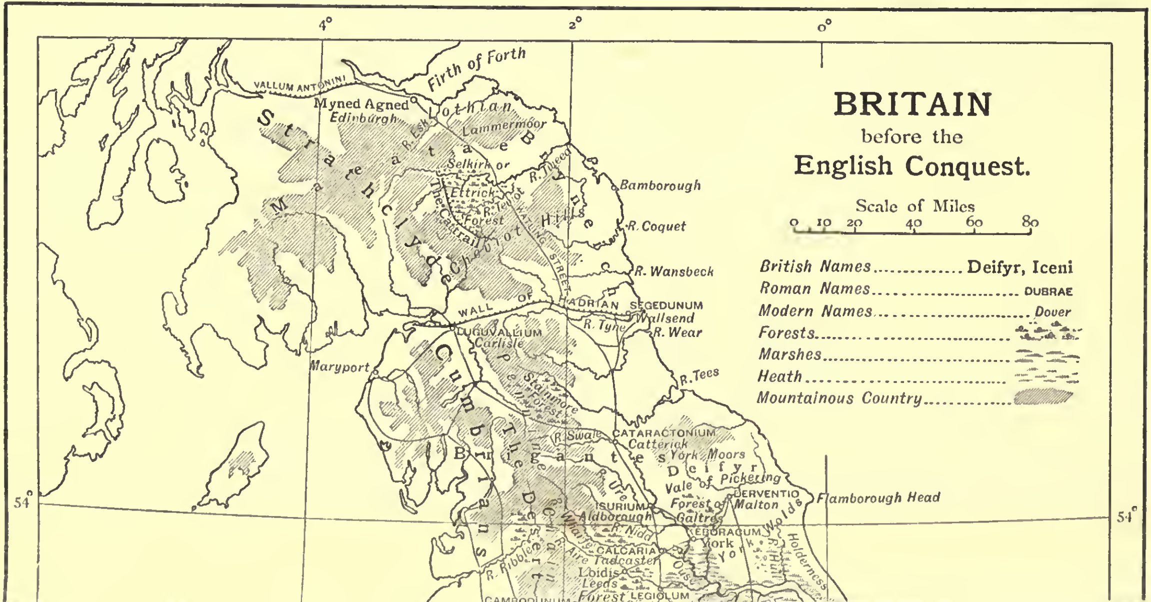
Longitude West 2° of Greenwich
Walker & Boutall sc.


BRITAIN
before the
English Conquest.
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 40 60 80
British Names............Deifyr, Iceni
Roman Names............DUBRAE
Modern Names............Dover
Forests............
Marshes............
Heath............
Mountainous Country............
4°
2°
0°
54°
Firth of Forth
VALLUM ANTONINI
Myned Agned
Edinburgh
Lothian
Lammermoor
R. Esk
Selkirk or
Ettrick
Forest
R. Teviot
R. Tweed
The Catrail
Cheviot Hills
Bamborough
R. Coquet
R. Wansbeck
WATLING STREET
WALL OF HADRIAN
SEGEDUNUM
Wallsend
R. Tyne
R. Wear
LUGUVALLIUM
Carlisle
Maryport
R. Tees
Stainmore
Forest
CATARACTONIUM
Catterick
R. Swale
York Moors
Vale of Pickering
DERVENTIO
Malton
Forest of
Galtres
Flamborough Head
ISURIUM
Aldborough
R. Ure
R. Nidd
R. Wharfe
CALCARIA
Tadcaster
R. Aire
EBORACUM
York
Yorks Wolds
Holderness
R. Hull
R. Ouse
Loidis
Leeds
Forest
LEGIOLUM
CAMBODUNUM
R. Ribble
Strathclyde
Bernicia
Deifyr
Cumbrians
Brigantes
The Desert


Longitude West 2° of Greenwich
4°
0°
52°
52°
Walker & Boutall sc.

THE MAKING OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER VI

THE NORTHUMBRIAN SUPREMACY

617—659

THE gathering of the conquering peoples who had encamped on the soil of Britain into three great kingdoms, a process which we may look on as fairly completed at the time of the battle of the Idle, seemed the natural prelude to a fusion of these kingdoms themselves into a single England. It is indeed the effort to bring about this union that forms the history of the English people for the next forty years, and that gives meaning and interest to what Milton scorned as "battles of kites and crows," the long struggles of North-umbrian, Mercian, and West-Saxon kings to establish their supremacy over the general mass of Englishmen. In this struggle Northumbria took the lead. The attack of Æthelfrith upon Rædwald was, in fact, the opening of such a contest. But

Eadwine in Northumbria.

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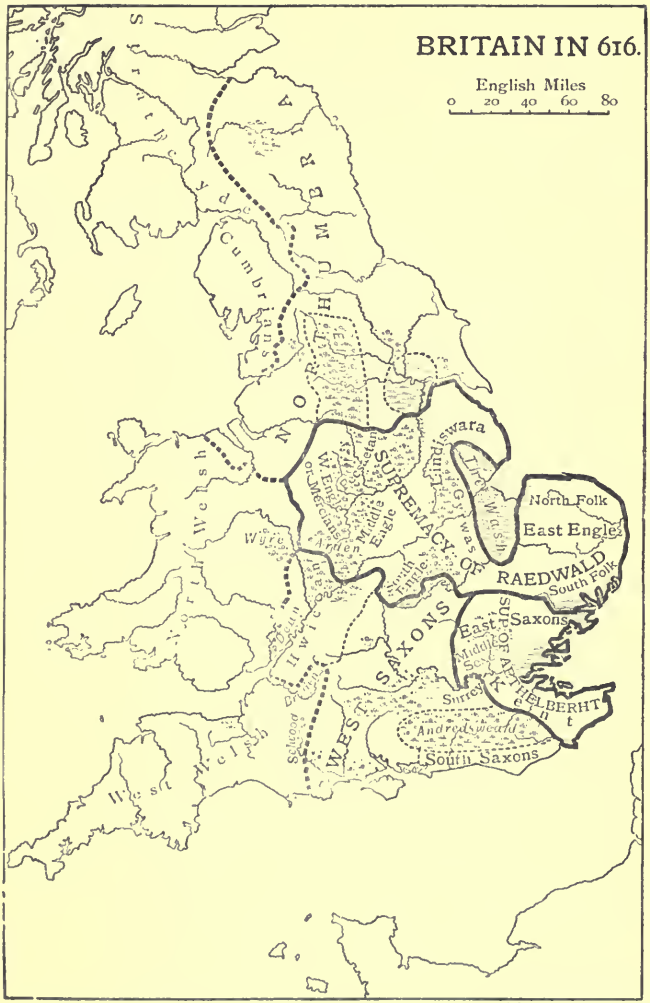
its issue seemed to have been fatal to any projects of establishing a supremacy, for the fall of Æthelfrith not only preserved the independence of Mid-Britain, but it broke up for the moment the kingdom which his sword had held together. On his defeat Deira rose against her Bernician masters, and again called the line of Ælla in its representative, Eadwine, to its throne. Eadwine, however, was as resolute to hold the two realms together as Æthelfrith had been; and he was no sooner welcomed back by his people of Yorkshire than he marched northward to make the whole of Northumbria his own. As it had been originally created by the subjection of Deira to the king of the Bernicians, so it was now held together by the subjection of Bernicia to the king of the Deirans. The march of Eadwine drove Æthelfrith's seven sons from their father's realm; and followed by a train of young thegns, whose exile was probably the result of a fruitless struggle, the descendants of Ida found refuge over the Forth among the Picts.[1]

Elmet.

Nor was there any loss of strength for the realm under its new ruler. Eadwine was in the prime of life[2] when he mounted the throne, and the work of government was carried on with as ceaseless an energy as that of Æthelfrith himself. On his northern border, if we may trust a tradition drawn from its name, Eadwine crowned a hill

[1] Bæda, H. E. iii. c. 1.

[2] He must have been at his accession about thirty years old.


BRITAIN IN 616.
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80
NORTHUMBRIA
Cumbrians
Welsh
Iceni
North Folk
East Engle
South Folk
RAEDWALD
East Saxons
Middle Saxons
SUPREMACY OF ETHELBERHT
Kent
Surrey
Andredsweald
South Saxons
WEST SAXONS
Hwicca
Wight
Walker & Boutall sc.

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which overlooks the Firth of Forth with his own "Eadwine's burh," or Edinburgh, which was to grow from a mere border post against the Picts into the capital of a northern kingdom. But it was not in the north or in the north-west that his main work seems to have been done. To the Bernician house of Ida, the most pressing foes would be the Britons of Cumbria and Strathclyde; but to the Deiran house of Ælla the most pressing foes were the Britons of Elmet. York, and not Bamborough, was the centre of Eadwine's kingdom, and from any of the Roman towers which still recalled the older glories of that city, the young king could see rising but a few miles off to the westward the woodlands and moorlands of a British realm. The kingdom which thus fronted Eadwine covered no small space of the present Yorkshire. On the south it extended to the fastnesses of the Peak, where the Pecsetan of the middle English were still no doubt pressing slowly up the valleys of the Derwent and the Dove. To the west its border can hardly have run in any other line than along the higher moorlands of the chain that parts our Yorkshire from our Lancashire. How far Elmet extended to the north we have nothing to tell us; but from the character of the ground itself we may fairly gather that the later forest of Knaresborough formed a portion of its area, and that it extended in this direction as far as the upper valleys of the Wharfe and the

Walker & Boutall sc.

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Nidd. Its eastern boundary, which is more important for our story, can luckily be fixed with greater precision; for the road which the Roman engineers drew northward from their bridge over the Don at Danum or Doncaster, and which bent in a shallow curve by Castleford and by Tadcaster to York, skirted the very edge of the forest tract which remained in possession of the Britons. Here Leeds itself preserves the name of Loidis, by which Elmet seems also to have been known, while Barwick in Elmet shows by its position how closely the edge of the British kingdom must have run to the Roman road.

The kingdom of Elmet then answered, roughly speaking, to the present West-Riding of Yorkshire, but no contrast can be imagined more complete than the contrast between the district of to-day, with its huge towns and busy industries, and the Elmet of Eadwine's day. The bulk of its area must then have been, as it remained indeed down to the seventeenth century, among the loneliest and most desolate parts of Britain. In the south the great woodland which covered it long remained unchanged. As late as Henry the Eighth's days, Sir Thomas Wortley could set his lodge on the crag of Wharncliffe in the midst of the huge oak forest through which the Don, here little more than a mountain torrent, hurries down to the plain, "for his plesor to hear the harte's bell" amidst the stillness of the woods. More to the north by

Wakefield the priory of Nostell, in the vale of Calder, tells in its name that the place was still a North Stall of foresters in the woodland when, in the days of the Norman kings, a royal chaplain gathered the hermits whom he found dwelling in its quiet glades into a religious house; while along the skirts of this district stretched the Barnsdale whose "merry greenwood" gave a home to the outlaws and broken men of Robin Hood. To the north was a vast reach of bare moorlands scored with the deep and grassy vales of the Wharfe and the Nidd, while in the very heart of the kingdom thickets and forests, in which the last wolf ever seen in Yorkshire is said to have been killed by John of Gaunt, formed a screen for the town which still, after so many changes and chances, preserves its original British name of Loidis or Leeds.[1]

Conquest of Elmet.

A few miles to the northward, indeed, of Leeds traces have been found of Roman ironworks, but all signs of industrial life had probably long disappeared when Eadwine marched from York for the conquest of Elmet.[2] His immediate ground of attack was possibly a wish to avenge the poisoning of his uncle, Hereric, by its king, Cerdic;

[1] When the Cistercians settled at Kirkstall close to Leeds in the twelfth century, they found nothing there "præter ligna et lapides."

[2] The only authority for the date of this conquest is Nennius, c. 63. "Eoguin, filius Alli, ... occupavit Elmet, et expulit Certic, regem illius regionis." But we know from Bæda that Elmet was in Eadwine's hands before his death.

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but we know nothing of the winning of this district or of its settlement. On the very edge of the British kingdom, however, on a rise of ground westward of the road from Castleford to Tadcaster, we find what is probably a memorial of this conquest in the group of earthworks at Barwick in Elmet, entrenchments and ditches inclosing a large area with a mound in its centre, which probably marks the site of one of the burhs or fortified houses with which Eadwine held down the country he had subdued. At Leeds itself too, the king seems to have established a royal vill, which would be of the same military character; while yet further to the westward in the upper valley of the Calder, where no "Othere" had as yet settled in the "field" of the coming Huddersfield, but through which a solitary track struck to the border moorlands, we may perhaps find the site of another of Eadwine's dwellings and fortresses beside the site of the ruins of Campodunum.[1]

Conquest of the South.

But in such a region we naturally find scanty traces of English settlement. The importance of

[1] After his conversion, Eadwine "in Campodunno, ubi tunc villa regia erat, fecit basilicam" (Bæda, ii. xiv.). (Ælfred's paraphrase however gives for Campodunum "Donafelda," which Gale believes to be Tanfield by Ripon near the Swale.) It was burnt after Eadwine's fall, but its altar was preserved in Bæda's day in the monastery of Abbot Thrydulf, "quod est in silva Elmete" (ibid.); and in its stead "pro quâ reges posteriores fecere sibi villam in regione quæ vocatur Loidis" (ibid.). The "Elmedsætna," with their territory of six hundred hides mentioned in the old list given by Kemble ("Saxons in England," vol. i. p. 81), are probably the settlers in Elmet after its conquest.

the conquest, indeed, lay not so much in its addition of long ranges of moorland and woodland to Eadwine's realm, as in its clearing away the barrier which this British kingdom interposed between Northumbria and Æthelfrith's conquests to the south of the Ribble. The kingdom of Eadwine thus stretched without a break from the eastern to the western sea, and Chester must have acquired a new importance as the western seaport of Eadwine's realm, for it can only have been in the harbour of Chester that the king can have equipped the fleet which he needed to subdue the isles of Anglesea and Man.[1] But the conquest of Elmet did more than raise Northumbria into a sea-power. With the reduction of this district the border of the northern kingdom stretched without a break along the border of Mid-Britain, and the pressure of Eadwine upon the southern Engle became irresistible. Rædwald's death followed immediately after his victory at the Idle,[2] and the dominion he had built up may have fallen to pieces in the hands of his son Eorpwald; it is at any rate certain that before the close of Eorpwald's reign the tribes of the Trent valley[3] had come to

[1] "Mevanias Brittonum insulas, quæ inter Hiberniam et Brittanniam sitæ sunt, Anglorum subjecit imperio."—Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5.

[2] Eorpwald succeeded him in 617.—Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 15; see Hussey's note.

[3] Paulinus baptized "præsente rege Eadwine" in the Trent valley at Tiovulfingacacster, and this conversion of the Lindsey folk with the establishment of a bishop's see at Lincoln must have been brought about by the same influence (Baeda, H. E.

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own the supremacy of Eadwine. It was in fact his mastery over Mid-Britain that brought the Northumbrian king to the borders of Wessex. Eadwine prepared for a struggle with this last rival by a marriage with the sister of the Kentish king, Eadbald, which, if it did not imply the subjection of the Kentish kingdom, in any case bound it to his side. In the summer of 625 [1] the priest Paulinus brought Æthelburh or Tate to the Northumbrian court at York. The marriage was taken by the West-Saxons as a signal of the coming attack; and a story preserved by Bæda tells something of the fierceness of the struggle which ended in the subjection of the conquerors of Southern Britain to the supremacy of Northumbria. In the Easter-court of 626,[2] which he held in a king's town near the river Derwent, Eadwine gave audience to Eumer, an envoy of the West-Saxons. Eumer brought a message from Cwichelm, who was now joined in their kingship with his brother Cynegils, but in the midst of the conference he started to his feet, drew a dagger from his robe, and flung himself on the Northumbrian sovereign. Lilla, a thegn of the royal war-band, threw himself between Eadwine and the assassin; but so fell was the stroke that even through Lilla's body the dagger still reached the

lib. ii. c. 16), as well as the conversion of the East-Anglian king Eorpwald (ibid. c. 15).

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 9.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 9.

king. The wound however was slight, and Eadwine was soon able to avenge it by marching on the West-Saxons and slaying or subduing all who had conspired against him.[1] The issue of such a triumph was the recognition of his supremacy by Cynegils:[2] and with the submission of Cynegils the overlordship of Eadwine practically stretched over the whole of Britain.

Eadwine's rule.

In the nine eventful years which had passed since he mounted his father's throne Eadwine had thus gathered the whole English race into a single political body.[3] He was king or overlord of every English kingdom, save of Kent; and Kent was knit to him by his marriage with Æthelburh. The gathering of the English conquerors into the three great southern, midland, and northern groups, which had characterized the past forty years, from the battle of Deorham to the battle of the Idle, seemed to have ended in their gathering into a single people in the hand of Eadwine. Under Eadwine, indeed, the greatness of Northumbria reached its height. Within his own dominions the king displayed a genius for civil government which shows how utterly the mere age of conquest had passed away. With him began an English proverb

[1] Engl. Chron. a. 626; Bæda, H. E. ii. 9.

[2] "In deditionem recepit."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 9.

[3] "Ita ut, quod nemo Anglorum ante eum, omnes Brittanniæ fines, qua vel ipsorum vel Brittonum provinciæ habitant, sub ditione acceperit."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 9. "Majore potentiâ cunctis qui Brittanniam incolunt, Anglorum pariter et Brittonum, populis præfuit præter Cantuariis tantum."—Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5.

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often applied to after kings, "A woman with her babe might walk scatheless from sea to sea in Eadwine's days."[1] Peaceful communication revived along the deserted highways; the springs by the roadside were marked with stakes, and a cup was set beside each for the traveller's refreshment. Some faint traditions of the Roman past may have flung their glory round what Bæda ventures to call this "Empire of the English"; some of the Roman majesty had at any rate come back with its long-lost peace. Nor is it without significance that we find Eadwine's capital established at York. A hundred years had passed since its conquest by the Deirans had left the city a desolate ruin; but its natural advantages as the centre of a fertile tract and as the highest point to which sea-traversing boats could find their way up the Ouse must soon have begun to draw population again to its site. We do not, however, hear of its new life till we find Eadwine established at York as his capital,[2] and the choice of such a settlement in a spot where so much remained to tell of the greatness of Rome can hardly have failed to connect itself with the imperial dreams which were stirring in the mind of Eadwine. In his wide rule over the whole of Britain Eadwine seems to have felt him-

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 16. The words "from sea to sea" show that this order was not confined to Eadwine's own Deira, but extended over his newer conquests of Elmet and the Ribble country.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 14.


BRITAIN IN 626.
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80
SUPREMACY OF EADWINE
Isle of Man
Anglesea
Lindiswara
North Folk
East Engle
South Folk
East Saxons
Middle Sexe
Surrey
KENT
South Saxons
Andredswealda
Wessex
West Wales
North Wales
Cumberland
Northumbria
Deira
Bernicia
Mercia
Middle Angle
South Engle
Wyre
Hwicce
Gyrwas
Walker & Boutall sc.

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self a successor to its Roman masters. A standard of purple and gold floated before him as he rode through village and township, while a feather-tuft attached to a spear, the Roman tufa, was borne in front of him as he walked through their streets.[1]

Conversion of North-umbria.

But the effort for a political unity was a premature effort. Not till two hundred years were past were the English peoples to be really gathered into a single realm. Not till three hundred years were gone by was a real national life to develop itself in a single England. The work was indeed to be in great measure brought about by the very agency which at this moment came to wreck the work of Eadwine. Though Christianity had shrunk back since the death of Æthelberht within the bounds of the Kentish kingdom, the hope of carrying out Gregory's wider plans of conversion had never been abandoned, and in the marriage of Æthelburh with Eadwine, Archbishop Justus saw an opening for attempting the conquest of the north. The new queen brought with her as her chaplain Paulinus, whom we have already seen in East-Anglia. He had been consecrated as Bishop of York in preparation for this journey, and his tall, stooping form, slender, aquiline nose, and black hair falling round a thin, worn face, were long remembered in the north. Æthelburh's zeal for her faith reaped its reward, for, moved by her prayers, Eadwine promised to believe in her God if

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 16.

he returned successful from the fight with the West-Saxons. But he was slow to redeem his pledge. Whether the fate of Æthelberht had warned him or no, he spent the whole winter in silent musing,[1] till Paulinus, laying his hand on his head, revealed himself as the stranger who had promised Eadwine deliverance in Rædwald's court, and claimed the fulfilment of the pledge which the exile had given.[2] Moved, it may be, by the appeal or convinced by the long musings of the winter-tide, Eadwine declared himself a Christian, and in the spring of 627 he gathered the Wise Men of Northumbria to give their rede on the faith he had embraced. The record of the debate which followed is of singular interest as revealing the sides of Christianity which pressed most on our forefathers. To finer minds its charms lay, then as now, in the light it threw on the darkness which encompassed men's lives—the darkness of the future as of the past. "So seems the life of man, O king," burst forth an aged Ealdorman, "as a sparrow's flight through the hall when one is sitting at meat in winter-tide, with the warm fire lighted on the hearth but the icy rain-storm without. The sparrow flies in at one door, and tarries for a moment in the light and heat of the hearth-fire, and then flying forth from the other vanishes into

[1] "Sæpe diu solus residens, ore quidem tacito, sed in intimis cordis multa secum conloquens."—Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 9.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 12.

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the darkness whence it came. So tarries for a moment the life of man in our sight; but what is before it, what after it, we know not. If this new teaching tells us aught certainly of these, let us follow it." Coarser argument told on the crowd. "None of your folk, Eadwine, have worshipped the gods more busily than I," said Coifi the priest, "yet there are many more favoured and more fortunate. Were these gods good for anything they would help their worshippers." Then leaping on horseback he hurled a spear into the sacred temple at Godmanham, and with the rest of the Witan embraced the religion of the king.[1]

Its results.

But hardly had the change been made, when its issues justified the king's long hesitation. Easily as it was brought about in Eadwine's court, the religious revolution gave a shock to the power which he had built up in Britain at large. Though Paulinus baptized among the Cheviots as on the Swale, it was only in Deira that the Northumbrians really followed the bidding of their king. If Eadwine reared anew a church at York, no church, no altar, rose in Bernicia from the Forth to the Tees.[2] Nor was the new faith more fortunate in the subject kingdoms. Lindsey indeed hearkened to the preaching of Paulinus,[3] and Rædwald's son, Eorpwald of East Anglia, bent to baptism soon

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 13.
[2] Bæda, H. E. iii. 2.
[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. 16.

after the conversion of Eadwine.[1] But even here the faith of Woden and Thunder was not to fall without a struggle. Eorpwald was at once slain by a pagan thegn; and his people returned to their old heathendom. Such a rejection of the faith of their overlord marks, no doubt, a throwing off of Eadwine's supremacy by the men of East Anglia, and thus prepares us for the revolution which must have taken place at the same moment throughout the valley of the Trent, and above all among the West Engle, or Mercians.

The Mercians.

Till now the Mercians had in no wise been distinguished from the other Engle tribes. Their station, indeed, on the Welsh border had invited them to widen their possessions by conquest, while the rest of the Anglian peoples of Mid-Britain were shut off from any chance of expansion; and this frontier position must have kept their warlike energy at its height. But nothing had yet shown in them a power which could match even that of the Engle on the eastern coast. It was only at the close of the sixth century indeed that the settlers along the march had drawn together into a kingdom: and the bounds of the Kentish and East-Anglian overlordships show that the two earliest Mercian kings, Crida and Wibba, must have owned the supremacy of Æthelberht, and bowed beneath the supremacy of Rædwald. When

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. 15. For the date of Eorpwald's baptism, see Hussey's note in his Bæda, p. 105.

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East Anglia fell from her pride of place into subjection to Eadwine, we can hardly doubt that a third king, Cearl, who seems to have seized the throne in spite of the claims of Wibba's son, Penda, submitted with small reluctance to an overlord who had wedded his daughter while in exile at his court. But Quænburg and Cearl had alike passed away; and at this moment the old relations of friendship between Northumbria and these Western Engle were changed into an attitude of mutual hostility by the accession of Penda.

Penda.

It was in 626, on the very eve of Eadwine's conversion, that Penda the son of Wibba became king of the Mercians.[1] Penda was already a man of fifty years old; and famous for the daring of his raids on the neighbours of his people during the years of his exclusion from the throne.[2] He seems to have seized the kingship at last after a violent struggle, in which the sympathies if not the actual aid of the Northumbrian overlord must, from his ties of kindred, have been with Cearl and his house. With Penda's success, therefore, Eadwine saw himself fronted by a formidable foe in the upper Trent valley. But, vigorous as the new Mercian king was, we can hardly doubt that it was not so much his vigour as the conversion

[1] Malm. Gest. Reg. i. sec. 74. According to Henry of Huntingdon, Crida was the first Mercian king; on his death in 600 he was followed by Wibba for ten years, to 610; then by Cearl from 610 to 626; then by Wibba's son, Penda.

[2] Ibid.

of Eadwine which shook the Northumbrian power over Mid-Britain, and enabled Penda at once to seize the supremacy over its Engle peoples. His efforts would no doubt be aided by the tendency of these peoples themselves to fall back on their older grouping in the days of Rædwald, if not of Æthelberht, and by their preference of a South-Humbrian to a North-Humbrian overlord. But whatever was the cause of his success, he must have already asserted his superiority over the English tribes about him before he could have ventured to attack the West-Saxons as he attacked them only two years after his accession, in 628.[1] The strife, however, of the West-Saxon tribes among themselves, as well as the terrible overthrow they had lately suffered at the hands of Eadwine, favoured their assailant; and their defeat at Cirencester seems to have been a decisive one. The locality of the battle, in the territory not of the original West-Saxon kingdom, but of the Hwiccas, who, as we have seen, still remained as late as Æthelberht's days a separate people from their fellow-Gewissas, may perhaps explain Penda's success, if, like the Britons at Wanborough, he fought as an ally of the Hwiccas against Cynegils and Cwichelm. The strife in any case ended in a formal treaty,[2] whose provisions we may perhaps guess from what we find soon after to be the

[1] Engl. Chron. a. 628.

[2] And gethingodan þa.—Eng. Chron. a. 628.

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bounds of the Mercian rule. In the days of Penda's son, Wulfhere, the whole territory of the Hwiccas had become part of the Mercian realm; and there is no recorded event by which we can account for this great change of boundaries save the battle of Cirencester.

Penda and Eadwine.

Such a triumph at once changed the political aspect of Britain. Not only had Mercia risen to supremacy over the valley of the Trent, but her conquest had carried her dominion to the mouth of the Severn and added to her realm our Worcestershire, our Gloucestershire, and our Herefordshire. The West-Saxons, stripped of Ceawlin's winnings, not only shrank into a lesser power, but necessarily passed from their subjection under Eadwine to a virtual submission to Penda. The Northumbrian king was in fact thrown suddenly back across the Humber; and the work of his earlier years was undone at a blow. But Eadwine was far from relinquishing his aims. The religion he had embraced was used to restore his shaken power; and a Burgundian bishop, Felix, was sent by his brother-in-law, the Kentish king, to again attempt the conversion of the East-Angles.[1] Eadwine however had a stronger arrow in his quiver. Another son of Rædwald, Sigeberht, had been driven under Eorpwald from East-Anglia, and had taken refuge among the Franks over sea. There he had become a Christian; and Eadwine

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 15.

was thus enabled to bring a Christian king of their own stock to the East-Anglians in 631.[1] The reception of Sigeberht involved a fresh reception of Christianity, and doubtless of the overlordship of Northumbria with it. But the winning of East-Anglia made a war with Penda inevitable. East-Engle and West-Engle had in fact to settle which should be supreme over their fellow-peoples about them, and around which should be built up the great Engle state of Mid-Britain. And beyond this strife lay the greater struggle which was to decide whether the Engle of Mid-Britain could hold their own against the Engle of the North.

Penda and the Welsh.

In such a strife the odds were heavy against Penda, had he waited to encounter the hosts of East-Anglia and of Northumbria at once. To crush the northern state, and then deal singly with his rival in Mid-Britain, was his obvious policy, and accounts for his choosing the part of assailant in the coming struggle. But even single-handed Northumbria was more than his match, and he could hardly have ventured on an attack on Eadwine had he not found aid in the people which had till now been the special enemies of his own border-folk. Cadwallon, the Welsh king of Gwynedd, may have seen in Eadwine's difficulties a chance of avenging his race for the conquest of Elmet, as well as of winning back the

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 15.

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country which Æthelfrith had reft away; and it was with Cadwallon that Penda leagued himself against their common foe. The absolute severance between conquerors and conquered, which had played so great a part in the events of the last two hundred years, was, as we have seen, fast breaking down. The union of Britons with the Hwiccas in their attack on Ceawlin, the home which the house of Ælla found among the Welsh of Elmet, as well as the home which the house of Æthelfrith found among the Picts, were indications that the Britons would henceforth look for help in their struggle to divisions among the Englishmen themselves, and that Englishmen in their turn were willing to seek British aid against their countrymen. Penda boldly recognized this fact as an element in English politics, when his host marched with the host of Cadwallon to attack the Northumbrian king.[1]

Battle of Hatfield.

The district in which Eadwine took post to meet Penda's attack was on the northernmost skirt of that vast tract of fen-land which formed a natural barrier for Northumbria against any assailant from Mid-Britain. Even the Roman engineers failed to carry a causeway directly from the south across the marshes of the Trent, and the traveller on his way to Eburacum was forced to make a circuit from Leicester to Lincoln, and to cross the fen, perhaps by a ferry, at some dis-

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.

tance south of Gainsborough, ere he could reach a firmer road at Bawtrey, and strike directly for the north. But even this firmer road was little more than a strip of ground hard pressed between forest and fen; for on one side, as we have seen, it was closely bordered by the oak-woods of Elmet, while on the other the fen stretched onward without a break from the course of the Trent to the lower channels of the Don, the Aire, the Derwent, and the Ouse. And not only was this gateway into the Northumbrian territory a narrow one, but it had from very ancient times been barred by strong defences. The British tribe of the Brigantes had drawn across this strip of land, behind the upper course of the Don, so strong a line of entrenchments that they seem to have held for a time even the Romans in check; and this work, which may still be traced after the waste of a thousand years, would if manned by the soldiers of Eadwine have been too formidable a barrier for Penda to face. To right or left, however, advance was scarcely less difficult; for it would have been hard to force a way through the southern fastnesses of Elmet, and it seemed even harder to find a road through the skirts of the fen which stretched away to the east. It was into the fen, however, that Penda plunged. Its wide reaches of mere marsh and broad pools of water swarming with eels were broken by lifts of slightly higher ground, covered by turf which

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rose and fell, so ran the popular belief, with the rise and fall of the rivers that ran through the district, and whose soil was so soft that it was easy to thrust a pole through it into the waters beneath. The rises, however, were firm enough to afford covert for vast herds of deer,[1] and it was from one such rise to another that the Mercian army must have made its way along the fen-tracks that threaded this desolate region. Hatfield, or the Heathfield, was one of the northernmost of these reaches of soppy moor; it lay in fact just south of the Don; and Eadwine, crossing that river by the paved ford which has left its mark on the name of Stainford, may have hoped by the seizure of this position to crush his assailant as he struggled through the pools and moor-paths of the fen. It was here at any rate, somewhere near the present town of Hatfield, that the two armies met; but in the fight which followed the Deiran king was defeated and slain.[2]

Its results.

Eadwine's overthrow proved the ruin of his house. Of his elder sons by the Mercian Quænburg one fell on the field, and another took refuge with Penda: while his wife Æthelburh fled with her

[1] In 1609 Prince Henry slew five hundred deer in a single day's hunting here; and before the draining of these fens in the civil wars deer were said to be as plentiful in Hatfield Chase as "sheep upon a hill." Smiles, in his "Lives of the Engineers" (Brindley and Early Engineers, ch. ii.), gives an account of this draining.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20; Engl. Chron. a. 633.

own two younger children to her brother in Kent.[1] With her fled Paulinus, for the battle was at once followed by a revival of the old heathendom; and Osric, a son of Ælla's brother Ælfric, who mounted the throne on Eadwine's fall, threw off Christianity and set up again the faith of Woden.[2] But Osric reigned over Deira alone; for the Englishmen of Bernicia seized on the defeat to break up the Northumbrian realm by throwing off the overlordship of their southern neighbours. They recalled the house of Ida; and Eanfrith, a son of Æthelfrith, returned from his refuge among the Picts to be welcomed as their king. Bernicia, as we saw, had never received the faith of Eadwine; and Eanfrith, though he had become a Christian at Hii, no sooner found himself among his people than like Osric he threw off the faith of Christ. The reigns of the two kings lasted one miserable year, a year whose shame was never forgotten among the Englishmen of the North. Penda indeed showed no inclination to follow up his victory by any attack on Northumbria; he even gave shelter to one of Eadwine's sons, when he was driven out, after some vain struggle perhaps with Osric for the Deiran throne.[3] His aim was to complete his dominion over Mid-Britain; he had in fact fought with Eadwine only

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 1.
[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.

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to isolate East-Anglia; and it was East-Anglia that he attacked in the year after the battle at Hatfield, in 634. Before the threat of his attack King Sigeberht had withdrawn from his throne to a monastery. His people dragged him back however from his cell as Penda approached, in faith that his presence would bring them the favour of Heaven; but though the monk-king was set in the forefront of the host he would bear no weapon save a wand; and his fall was followed by the rout of his army and the submission of his kingdom.[1] It remained Christian indeed, for his brother Anna who followed him on the throne was as zealous for the faith as Sigeberht; but Anna only reigned as an under-king; and East-Anglia became part of the overlordship of Penda.

Battle of the Hevenfeld.

If Penda had withdrawn however, Cadwallon remained harrying in the heart of Deira, and made himself master even of York.[2] Osric fell in an attempt to recover the town; and even the Bernician Eanfrith, while suing for peace, was murdered by the British king. But the triumph of the Britons was as brief as it was strange. Oswald, a second son of Æthelfrith, left Hii on his brother's death to place himself at the head of his race; and in 635 a small force gathered round the new king near the Roman wall.[3] The

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 18, 19.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 1. I take the "Oppido municipio" here to be York.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 2.


BRITAIN IN 634.
English Miles
0 20 40 60 80
BERNICIANS
DEIRANS
Lindiswara
North Folk
East Engle
South Folk
PENDA
East Saxons
Middle Sexe
KENT
Surrey
South Saxons
WEST SAXONS
SUPREMACY
Middle Engle
South Engle
Hwicca
Wyrc.
Arden
Dobn.
Wrekin
Magesætan
Hecana
Wrocen.
Cumbria
Wessex
Walker & Boutall sc.

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host of the Bernicians was heathen as of old, and of Oswald's force none were Christians save twelve nobles who had followed him from Hii, and who, like himself, had been converted during their exile. But Oswald had no mind to cast away his faith like his brother Eanfrith. On the night before the battle a dream came to his aid. He saw the tall form of the founder of Hii, Columba, shrouding with its mantle almost the whole English camp, while his mighty voice bade the king "Be strong, and do like a man; lo! I am with thee."[1] As Oswald woke he gathered his Witan to tell them the vision; and with the quick enthusiasm of a moment of peril the whole host pledged itself to become Christian if it conquered in the fight. Obedient to the counsel Columba had given him in his dream, the king stole out from his camp on the following night, and fell with the dawn on the host of Cadwallon. Legend told how Oswald set up a cross of wood as his standard ere the fight began,[2] holding it with his own hands till the hollow in which it was fixed was filled by his soldiers, and how then, throwing himself on his knees, the king cried to his host to pray to the living God. They rose to fall upon the Britons. The surprise seems to have been complete. The Welsh were cut to pieces. Cadwallon fell fighting on the "Heaven's field,"

[1] Adamnan, "Life of Columba," ed. Reeves, pp. 14-16.
[2] This cross was still standing in Bæda's time (H. E. iii. 2).

as after times called the field of battle, and the fall of this last great hero of the British race left the Englishmen of Bernicia supreme in the north.[1]

Its results.

The victory of the Heaven-field indeed is memorable as the close of the last rally which the Britons ever made against their conquerors. Through more than fifty years, from the battle of Faddiley to the fall of Cadwallon, they had seemed at last strong enough to turn the tide of victory. In the south they had struck down Ceawlin and penetrated to the very heart of Wessex. In Central Britain they had long held the Mercians at bay even along the weak frontier of the watershed of the Trent. Even in the north, though their strongest combination had been crushed at Dægsastan, and their line fatally broken by the overthrow of Chester, they had at last succeeded in defeating Eadwine, in breaking up the realm of Northumbria, and in encamping as victors for a whole year on its soil. But with the battle of the Heaven-field this rally came to an end. The strength of the Welsh was exhausted; and henceforth their work was simply a long struggle of self-defence. To England the battle was of even larger import. It restored in great part the political work of Eadwine; for Deira submitted to Æthelric's grandson as it had submitted to Æthelric, and the Northumbrian kingdom

[1] Engl. Chron. a. 635; Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 1.

CHAP. VI. found itself restored in the firm hands of Oswald.[1]

The Northumbrian Supremacy 617-659. But it did more than restore his religious work. The conversion of the Bernicians gave Northumbria a religious unity such as it had never known till now, and with this unity Christianity rose to a yet more vigorous life. It came indeed in a different form from the Christianity of Eadwine; for it was not the Church of Paulinus which had nerved Oswald to his struggle for the cross, or which carried out in Bernicia the work of Christianization which his victory began. Paulinus, as we have seen, had fled southwards at Eadwine's fall; and the Roman Church, though safely established in Kent, ceased to struggle elsewhere against the heathen reaction. From that moment its place in the conversion of northern England was taken by missionaries from a land which was henceforth to play a part in English history.

Ireland. A Roman general, Agricola, as he gazed from the western coast of Britain across the channel which parted the two countries, had planned, as the last of his exploits, the conquest of Ireland. But the threat of Roman invasion was never carried out; and no foreign influence disturbed till a far later time the social and political development of the Irish people. In

[1] As a son of Eadwine's sister, Acha, Oswald partly shared the royal blood of Deira, and would thus be more acceptable to the Deirans than his father.

this way the tribal life which the Celts brought with them from the plains of Asia went on in Ireland as it went on nowhere else in the western world. Two of the great physical agents indeed which brought about its modification elsewhere were wanting, or all but wanting, there. In other lands mountain ranges, great river valleys, a varied distribution of hill and plain, tended to throw smaller tribes together into peoples and nations, and to form from their union a corporate organization which widened and elevated the sphere of human life and human action. Within the tribe itself, on the other hand, an increase in the culture of grain, above all in the culture of wheat, did much to fix what had been a mere mass of wandering herdsmen to particular spots, to make land rather than kinship the basis of society, to turn the sept into a village community, and thus to create new and higher types of social and domestic life. But the form and climate of Ireland offered almost insuperable obstacles to the full development of either of these processes of social growth. Ireland was an immense plain, set indeed within a hilly coast-line and broken by the course of the Shannon, by some lakes in the north, and by wide tracts of bog-land in the centre, but presenting over a vast area few of those natural features which could isolate one group of tribes from another. On the other hand, its moist climate and ceaseless rain made wheat-

culture uncertain and profitless, while it spread before the herdsman the greenest and most tempting of pasture lands. Throughout its history therefore the island remained a huge grazing ground. The most famous of the old Irish tales is the story of a cattle-raid; to drive off kine, indeed, was the main aim of the forays of tribe upon tribe. In Irish law fines, dues, rents, were all paid in live stock and generally in kine. Cattle were, in fact, to a very late time the chief Irish medium of exchange; and even at the opening of the sixteenth century we find an Earl of Kildare paying twenty cows as the price of a book. It was by taking a grant, not as elsewhere of land, but of cattle, that the free tribesman became the man or vassal of an Irish chief. In all of this we have no doubt indications of a system of property which was common at some time of their history to every Aryan nation. The peculiarity of Ireland lay in the preservation of such a social state when it had passed away elsewhere; and this preservation sprang from the nature of its climate and its soil.

Its institutions.

How primitive were the social institutions of the country may be seen from the character of its family life. Of polygamy indeed in households held together by the despotic power of the father, such as existed among the Celts in Gaul, we hear nothing among the Celts in Ireland. But temporary cohabitation remained even to the

sixteenth century a recognized social usage, though no doubt an exceptional one, while provision was made for the legitimization, not only of bastards, but of a wife's children by other fathers than her husband. It was from usages such as these that domestic life rose throughout Europe to its later and more elevated forms; but in Ireland the evolution was so slow as to remain for centuries almost imperceptible. In the same way life remained wholly pastoral or agricultural. Among the native tribes no approach was made to collective life in towns. Though the Irish village system differed little in form from the system which was a general heritage of the Aryan race, and which we have seen prevailing among our English forefathers, it remained based more on community of kindred than on community of land. Political life showed the same slowness of advance as social life. In the earlier Aryan community the chief seems to have been at once ruler, priest, and judge. In Ireland, as in Gaul, he remained simply ruler, while the professional lawmen or Brehons preserved and declared the mass of traditional customs which constituted Irish law. The structure of the nation remained purely tribal to the last days of its independence. We see indeed a faint tendency to union which elsewhere would have brought about a real national life. Common ties of descent sometimes bound tribes in confederacies like those which

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gathered at an early date round a common king of Cashel; sometimes weak tribes grouped themselves round stronger, such as the O'Neils or the O'Donels at a later day in the north. From time to time even the promise of a national sovereignty rose out of the chaos of political life. But it never proved more than a promise. Traditional feeling owned the right to a general overlordship as existing in descendants of the house of Nial; legal theory gave this king of Ireland a king's seat at Tara, assigned to him Meath as his special domain, and asserted his right to receive tributes of cattle from lower chieftains. But strong as was the hold of this tradition, the supremacy of the King of Meath never became a lasting or effective force in Irish history.

Their slow development.

The result of this peculiar temper of the Irish people was fated to be seen long ages after the time we have reached in the violent contrast which Ireland presented with other countries of the western world. To the Europe of the twelfth or the sixteenth century the island appeared simply a country of uncivilized barbarians. But neither in Irish politics nor in Irish society was there anything radically different from the political and social organization which we find in the early stages of other European communities. What distinguished Ireland from other nations was the slowness of its development as compared with theirs. Usages which elsewhere marked a remote

antiquity lingered on here into historic time. The Brehon of the thirteenth century defined the law which applied to the bastard child of a married woman as minutely as his predecessor had done in the fifth. Though private possession slowly made its way, the system of common possession lasted up to the age of the Tudors as the main social feature of the country, and then was only violently put an end to by the English lawyers. Law went on in a customary form with little or no tendency to take statutory shape. The system of justice never advanced from the blood-fine which was originally common in all early races to any general jurisdiction of the tribe. Submission indeed even to the blood-fine, as to any form of judicial interposition, remained voluntary to the last among Irish disputants; and it was only by a complicated system of distress that they could be forced within the pale of the law. It was the same, as we have seen, with political life. In no tribe did any principle of real cohesion develope itself which could serve as the groundwork of national union. As in other lands, the chief increased in power as time went on by the creation of a class of vassals out of free tribesmen who sought or were forced to take grants of cattle, as well as from the settlement of refugees from one tribe within the boundaries of another. But to the last the power of the Irish chieftains remained as weak for any real purposes

CHAP. VI. of government as it was effective for purposes of oppression.[1]

The Northumbrian Supremacy 617-659. Patrick.

At the time when the first Englishmen invaded Britain, the Scots, as the people of Ireland were then called, were among the most formidable assailants of the island. In the raids of their pirate fleets on its shores or on those of Gaul thousands of the wretched provincials were swept off into slavery. Among these captives was a boy whose work was destined to leave a deep mark on the history and character of the wild tribesmen who carried him from his native land. At the time of his capture Patricius, or as the more modern form of his name runs, Patrick,[2] was nearly sixteen years old; and for ten more years he remained in Ireland as a slave. The years were years of conversion to a deeper sense of heavenly things. As he tended his master's kine, the young herdsman would often rise before daylight to pray in woods and mountain, even amidst frost and snow; "and I felt no ill," he says, "nor was there any sloth within me, because, as I see now, the Spirit was burning in me."[3] At last a dream raised in him the longing for freedom; he fled from his master's hand; and after hard

[1] For the social condition of Ireland in these early times see Sir Henry Maine's "Early History of Institutions."

[2] For a full criticism of the materials for Patrick's life, see Dr. Todd's "St. Patrick."

[3] Confessio S. Patricii, ap. S. Patricii Opuscula, ed. Villanueva (Dublin, 1835), p. 190.

wanderings found himself at home again. But, years later, he was driven to return to the land of his slavery. "In dead of night," he writes, "I saw a man coming to me as if from Ireland, whose name was Victorinus, and who bore countless letters. And he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of it, which contained the words, 'The voice of the Irish.' And while I was repeating the words of this beginning I thought I heard the voice of those who were near the wood Foclut, which is nigh to the western sea; and they cried thus: 'We pray thee, holy youth, to come and live among us henceforth.' And I was greatly pricked in heart, and could read no more."[1]

Conversion of Ireland.

Patrick woke to obey the words of his dream. He was ordained priest and bishop, and again landed on the shores of Ireland. But from the moment of his landing his life is lost in clouds of poetic legend. His work, however, was manfully done. By him or by his followers the island was quickly won for the faith of Christ: chieftains were converted, schools, churches, and monasteries were set up in every quarter. But the form which the new communion took was widely different from that which it took in other countries of the West. Elsewhere Christianity had been above all the religion of the Roman Empire. As it mastered the Roman provinces its organization moulded

[1] Confessio S. Patricii, ibid. p. 194.

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itself on the organization of the state. The administrative divisions of the one became the ecclesiastical divisions of the other. The prefect and vicar of the Empire were reflected in the archbishop and bishop of the Church. The town with its dependent tract of country became the diocese. The law-court was often turned into the church. Christianity was localized, organized, with officers, law, and discipline of its own, working side by side with and in fixed relation to the civil organization of the empire which adopted it. But in Ireland it found a very different sphere of action. Ireland had never formed a part of the Empire; and instead of the centralized system of Imperial government, the missionaries found there, as we have seen, a mass of tribes linked together only by force or a vague tradition into varying groups around a central king, chieftains whose authority was personal over their clansmen rather than territorial over any definite tract of country, a land without towns or centres of civil judicature, or more than a crude though minute system of traditional law.

Character of Irish Church.

Little as we know of the first Christian missionaries in Ireland, we see from its results that their work moulded itself with a curious fidelity on the social forms which the island offered.[1] The conversion of every chieftain was followed by the adhesion of his tribe, and a tribal character was

[1] Todd, "Life of St. Patrick," Introd.

given from the outset to the nascent church. The monastic impulse which was becoming dominant in the Christian world at the time told nowhere with greater force. The Irish churches took a monastic form; and the helpers and successors of Patrick became from the first abbots, each of them surrounded by a community of monks. But these monastic bodies were only centres of a tribal organization. In other countries of the West endowments of land fell to the local churches as they fell to guilds and voluntary civil societies of a similar class, and these endowments set them in the same rank of local corporations. In Ireland the grants given to the new monasteries and their superiors raised the abbot into the head of an artificial clan. He and his successors were not only heads of the spiritual community which gathered around them and was supported by these endowments, but chiefs of the new family in its civil capacity, and its bishops in a more spiritual aspect. As these ecclesiastical clans grew larger and more numerous their form modified itself, but still in the same peculiar way. Sometimes the successors of the original abbot divided his lay and spiritual authority. In such a case the community owned both a religious and a secular head. The spiritual coarb or heir, as the abbot was significantly called, was chosen by the monks over whom he presided, and the secular coarb by the tribesmen at large; though in both instances

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custom tended to restrict the choice to the family of the original founder. The office of bishop, too, generally detached itself from that of abbot and sank into a subordinate position. Without defined diocese or territorial position, the Irish bishops were at last distinguished from the rest of the clergy by no other marks than their possession of the strictly spiritual powers of consecration. Their number was enormous. Patrick was said to have consecrated more than three hundred, and a few centuries later they were believed to have reached seven hundred. As they had neither settled dioceses nor settled endowments their life was one of poverty and lowliness. A bishop might be found ploughing his own field by his own church. Another might be seen wandering with a pet cow at his heels through the country, without support save from the fees he charged for ordination. On the other hand, abbots of great monasteries like those of Durrow or Clonmacnois ranked among the great powers of the land. Kings quailed before their spiritual threats; they formed political combinations, and at need led kinsfolk or tribesmen to the field.

Character of Irish Christianity

While other churches of Western Christendom were organized on a national and episcopal basis, the Irish Church was thus at once tribal and monastic. Nor was it less different from them in character than in form. In its temper as in its organization it was purely Celtic. The work of

its conversion was hardly over when the conquest of Britain by the English cut off Ireland from the western world, and hindered the new community of religion from bringing it into contact with the general temper of European civilization. Save the little group of its first missionaries, even its earliest preachers were pure Irishmen, and the Church they founded grew up purely Irish in spirit as in form. The Celtic passion, like the Celtic anarchy, stamped itself on Irish religion. There was something strangely picturesque in its asceticism, in its terrible penances, its life-long fasts, its sudden contrasts of wrath and pity, the sweetness and tenderness of its legends and hymns, the awful vindictiveness of its curses. But in good as in ill its type of moral conduct was utterly unlike that which Christianity elsewhere developed. It was wanting in moral earnestness, in the sense of human dignity, in self-command; it showed little power over the passions of anger and revenge; it recognized spiritual excellence in a rigid abstinence from sensual excess and the repetition of countless hymns and countless litanies. But on the other hand Ireland gave to Christianity a force, a passionateness, a restless energy, such as it had never known before. It threw around it something of the grace, the witchery, the romance of the Irish temper. It coloured even its tenderness with the peculiar pathos of the Celt.

Its poetry.

The extravagance of the Irish saint-legends is

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broken everywhere by gleams of a delicate evanescent poetry. When the host of King Loegaire closes round Patrick to kill him and his comrades, the eight missionaries vanish with the boy, who followed them, and the host sees but eight roe-deer and a fawn tripping away to pasture. At another time two of the king's daughters, Fedelm the Red and Ethne the White, come down to a river-side to wash after the manner of women, and find there the group of wandering preachers.[1] "They knew not whence they came nor from what people, but took them for fairy-folk of the hills or earth, gods or phantoms." Patrick taught them his faith and baptized them; but his words woke a strange longing in the girls' hearts, and they asked to see the face of Christ. "And Patrick said: 'Ye cannot see the face of Christ save ye taste of death and take the Sacrifice of the Lord.' Then they bade him give it them. And they received God's eucharist and slept in death; and they were laid out both in one bed covered with their garments, and men made great dole and weeping over them." It is this peculiar tenderness that gives its charm to the love of living things that colours the legends of Celtic saints. The Irish hermit talks with the sea-birds who scream round his strip of sand-bank. Columba sits watching his reapers in the field and caressing

[1] Extract from Book of Armagh, in Todd's "St. Patrick," p. 452.

the head which a horse that had been feeding hard by comes to thrust into his lap.[1] The legend of Patrick linked an instance of his charity to animals with the foundation of Armagh. When he came to the spot he had chosen for his settlement, he found a roe with her fawn lying in the place where the altar of his church was afterwards to stand. His followers would have slain them, "but Patrick would not." He took up the fawn himself, carrying it on his shoulder; and the roe followed him like a pet lamb till he had laid down her fawn in another field.

Irish Missions.

It was this strange Christianity, strange alike in temper and in form, which began in the seventh century to leaven in a hundred different ways the Christianity of the West. When it burst upon Western Christendom, it brought with it an enthusiasm, an energy, a learning greater than any that it found there. For while in Italy or Gaul or Spain Christianity had spent its vigour in a struggle for self-preservation against the heathen invaders, in winning them to its creed, in taming them by its discipline, in bringing to bear on them the civilization which it had alone preserved through the storm of conquest, Ireland, unscourged by assailants, drew from its conversion a life and movement such as it has never known since. The science and Biblical knowledge which fled from the Continent took refuge in famous schools

[1] Adamnan, "Life of Columba," ed. Reeves, p. 231.

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which made Durrow and Armagh Universities of the West. The new Christian life soon beat too strongly to brook confinement within the bounds of Ireland itself. Patrick had not been a century dead when Irish Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the mass of heathenism which was rolling in elsewhere upon the Christian world. Irish missionaries laboured among the Picts of the Highlands and among the Frisians of the northern seas. An Irish missionary, Columban, founded monasteries in Burgundy and the Apennines. The Canton of St. Gall still commemorates in its name another Irish missionary before whom the spirits of flood and fell fled wailing over the waters of the Lake of Constance. For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed, as if the older Celtic race that Roman and German had driven before them had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors, as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Churches of the West.

Irish missionaries in North-umbria.

On a low island of barren gneiss-rock off the west coast of Scotland the Irishman Colom or Columba set up a mission station for the Picts at Hii;[1] and it was within the walls of this monastery that Oswald with his brothers had found refuge on their father's fall.[2] As soon as he was master of Northumbria, he naturally called for missionaries

[1] Adamnan, "Life of Columba," ed. Reeves, p. 434.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 3.

from among its monks. The first preacher sent in answer to his call obtained small success: he declared indeed on his return that among a people so stubborn and barbarous as these Northumbrian folk success was impossible. "Was it their stubbornness, or your harshness?" asked Aidan, a brother sitting by; "did you forget God's word to give them the milk first and then the meat?"[1] All eyes turned on the speaker as fittest to undertake the abandoned mission, and Aidan, sailing at their bidding, fixed his bishop's stool or see in 635 on the coast of Northumbria, in the island-peninsula of Lindisfarne.[2] Thence, from a monastery which gave to the spot its after name of Holy Island, preachers poured forth over the heathen realm. Boisil guided a little troop of missionaries to the valley of the Tweed. Aidan himself wandered on foot, preaching among the peasants of Bernicia. In his own court the king acted as interpreter to the Irish missionaries in their efforts to convert his thegns.[3] A new conception of kingship, indeed, began to blend itself with that of the warlike glory of Æthelfrith or the wise administration of Eadwine, and the moral power which was to reach its height in Ælfred first dawns in the story of Oswald. For after times the memory of Oswald's greatness was lost in the memory of his piety. "By reason of

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 5. The name in Irish form is Aedhan.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 3.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 3.

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his constant habit of praying or giving thanks to the Lord he was wont wherever he sat to hold his hands upturned on his knees."[1] As he feasted with Bishop Aidan by his side the thegn whom he had set to give alms to the poor at his gate told him of a multitude that waited fasting without. The king at once bade the untasted meat be carried to the poor and his silver dish be divided piecemeal among them. Aidan seized the royal hand and blessed it. "May this hand," he cried, "never grow old!"[2]

Oswald.

But if Oswald was a saint, he was none the less resolved to build up again a power such as that of Eadwine. His earlier efforts to widen his dominion seem to have been mainly in the north-west. Here his sway not only stretched over the Britons who formed the mass of the population in the district between Chester and the Ribble, but it is probable that he was owned as overlord by the Welsh kingdom of Strath-Clyde; for otherwise he could hardly have gone on to "receive into his lordship"[3] the Picts and the Dalriad Scots across the Forth. In southern Britain his success seems to have been more chequered. It may be doubted whether Mercia or the tribes along the Trent yielded more than a nominal submission to him,[4] but Penda must

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 12. [2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 6.

[3] "Omnes nationes et provincias Brittanniae, quae inquatuor linguas, id est: Brittonum, Pictorum, Scottorum, et Anglorum, divisæ sunt, in ditione accepit."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 6.

[4] Some submission there must have been, for Bæda says that

have shrunk for the while from any open struggle, for at the pressure of Oswald[1] he murdered Eadfrid, the second son of Eadwine by his Mercian wife Quænburh, who had for a while found refuge at his court. Kent, too, yielded to the same pressure, and drove Eadwine's children by Æthelburh to a refuge in Gaul.[2] In these realms, however, Oswald could hardly claim any direct overlordship, but elsewhere he was able to restore the realm of Eadwine. His arms wrested an acknowledgment of subjection from the Lindiswaras, after a struggle whose fierceness was shown by the bitter memory it left behind it among the conquered people.[3] East-Anglia, which had remained Christian amidst the heathen reaction elsewhere after the fall of Eadwine, seems still to have remained subject to Penda; but in the south Oswald succeeded in effectually restoring the Northumbrian supremacy. The battle of Cirencester and the loss of the country of the Hwiccas had taught the West-Saxons to look on Mercia as their most dangerous foe: and they were ready to seek aid against it in recognizing the overlordship of Oswald. Here, again, the new religion served as a prelude to the Northumbrian advance. Immediately after the victory of the Hevenfeld, in 635, Wessex declared itself Christian. The work of a preacher, Birinus, who had pene-

Oswald "iisdem finibus regnum tenuit" as Eadwine, which he has carefully specified. (H. E. ii. c. 5.)

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20. [2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 11.

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trated from Gaul into Wessex, proved so effective that king Cynegils received baptism in Oswald's presence and established with his assent a see for his people in the royal city of Dorchester on the Thames.[1]

It was this supremacy over so wide a ring of subject peoples which seemed to lift Oswald out of the rank of Kings. In him, even more than in Eadwine, men saw some faint likeness of the older Emperors. Once, indeed, a writer from the land of the Picts, the abbot Adamnan of Hii, calls Oswald "Emperor of the whole of Britain."[2] But great as he was, the doom of Oswald was fated to be that of Eadwine. Though the conversion of Wessex had prisoned it within the central districts of England, heathendom fought desperately for life. Penda remained its rallying-point; and the long reign of the Mercian king was, in fact, one continuous battle with the Cross. But so far as we can judge from his acts, Penda seems to have looked on the strife of religion in a purely political light. Christianity meant, in fact, either subjection to, or alliance with, Oswald; and the Northumbrian supremacy was again threatening his dominion on almost every border when Penda resolved to break through the net which was closing round him. The point of conflict, as before, seems to have been the dominion over East-Anglia. Its possession was as

[1] Beda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.

[2] Adamnan's "Life of Columba," ed. Reeves, p. 16.

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vital to Mid-Britain as it was to Northumbria, which needed it to link itself with its West-Saxon subjects in the south; and Oswald must have felt that he was challenging his rival to a decisive combat when he marched, in 642, to deliver the East-Anglians from Penda. But his doom was that of Eadwine; for he was overthrown and slain in a battle called the battle of the Maserfeld.[1] His last words showed how deeply the spirit of the new faith was telling on the temper of Englishmen. The last thought of every northern warrior as he fell had till now been a hope that kinsmen would avenge his death upon his slayers. The king's last words, as he saw himself girt about with blood-thirsty foes, passed into a proverb: "God have mercy on their souls, as Oswald said ere he fell."[2] His body was mutilated and his limbs set on stakes by the brutal conqueror;[3] but legend told that, when all else of Oswald had perished, the hand that Aidan had blessed still remained white and uncorrupted.[4]

Oswiu.

For a few years after his victory at the Maserfeld Penda stood supreme in Britain. Wessex must have been forced to own his supremacy;[5] for its king, Cenwealh, threw off the Christian faith and married Penda's sister. East-Anglia and Central Britain remained under Mercian sway, while the Northumbrian realm was a third time

[1] Engl. Chron. a. 642; Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 9.
[2] Bæda, H. E. iii. 12.
[3] Bæda, H. E. iii. 13.
[4] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. 6.
[5] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.

broken up, for even the men of Deira seem to have bent their necks to Penda, and Oswini, the son of Osric, whom they took for their king in a rising on Oswald's fall, was a mere under-king of the Mercian overlord.[1] Bernicia alone refused to yield. Year by year Penda carried his ravages over the north; once he reached even the royal city, the impregnable rock-fortress of Bamborough, Despairing of success in an assault, he pulled down the cottages around, and, piling their wood against its walls, fired the mass in a fair wind that drove the flames on the town. "See, Lord, what ill Penda is doing,"[2] cried Aidan from his hermit cell in the islet of Farne, as he saw the smoke drifting over the city; and a change of wind—so ran the legend of Northumbria's agony—drove back at the words the flames on those who kindled them. But, burnt and harried as it was, Bernicia still clung to the Cross. Oswiu, a third son of Æthelfrith, who had been called from Hii in 642 to fill the throne of his brother Oswald, gave little promise in his earlier days of those qualties which were to make his later reign a landmark in our history.[3] During the first nine years of his reign indeed, he was king only of Bernicia, and over Bernicia the host of Penda poured summer after summer in the terrible raids which we have described. But terrible as they were, Oswiu held stoutly to his

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 14.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 16. [3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 14.

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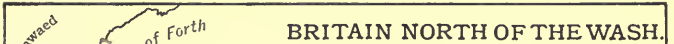
ground; and after some years he found himself not only master of his own people, but able to build up again the wider realm of the Northumbrians.

Restoration of North-umbria.

Oswini, who had occupied the Deiran throne since the fight at the Maserfeld, was a son of that Osric who had reigned for the miserable year which followed Eadwine's defeat at Hæthfeld. But the religious activity of Oswald and of Aidan had done its work. Unlike his father, Oswini was a Christian to the core; and his piety and humility won the love of Aidan, as his personal beauty and liberality won the love of his people.[1] But neither the one love nor the other could avert the young king's doom. A marriage which Oswiu concluded showed his purpose of recovering Deira. Eadwine's younger children by his Kentish queen had been carried by her after her fall to her Kentish home;[2] and the death of two of them left the girl Eanfled the representative of his line. Oswiu took Eanfled to wife as his father Æthelfrith had taken her aunt Acha; and in the one case as in the other the match had a political aim, that of neutralizing the loyalty of the men of Deira to the line of Ælla. It was in fact followed in 651 by the march of the Bernician king to the south. The news of Oswiu's approach with an overpowering host filled Oswini with despair, a despair quickened

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 14.

[2] Bæda, ii. 20. Really two children and one grandchild.


BRITAIN NORTH OF THE WASH.
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50
British Names.... Brigantes, Bryneich
Roman Names.... EBORACUM
English Names.... Eoforwick
Modern Names.... York
Firth of Forth
Tyningham
St. Abbs Hd.
Coldingham
Lammermoor
Selkirk or
Melrose
Ettrick
Yarrow
Ettrick
Forest
Peel
Peel
Lindisfarne
Holy I.
Bebbanburh
Bamborough
R. Coquet
R. Wansbeck
Hevenfeld
St. Oswalds
HADRIAN
SEGEDUNUM, Wallsend
Jarrow
Wearmouth
R. Tyne
Hexham
Ebchester
LUGUVALLIUM
Carlisle
Maryport
R. Tees
Hartlepool
Cliffland
Cleveland
Strenaeskhalc
Whitby
CATARACTONIUM
Catterick
York Moors
Richmond
Lastingham
Vale of Pickering
Flamborough Head
DERVENTIO
Malton
Forest of Galtres
King's Scaur
Ripon
ISURIUM
Aldborough
Settle
Ilkley
Whatle
EBORACUM.
Eoforwick
York
Goodmanham
Beverley
Holderness
Ravenspur?
CALCARIA
Raelcaceaster
Tadcaster
Ribchester
Market Weighton
LEGIOLUM
Castleford
Hatfield
Stainforth
DANUM
Doncaster
MANCUNIUM
Manchester
The Peak
Elmet
Bawtrey
Gainsborough
LINDUM
Lincoln
Sherwood Forest
Southwell
Newark
Northwecorthic
Derby
Nottinga
Nottingham
CAUSENNAE
Ancaster
Boston
Stamford
Leicester
Repton
RATAE
Leggeceaster
URICONIUM
Wroxeter
Pentwyrn
Shrewsbury
Baschurch
Maserfel
Old Oswestry
Fethanleah
Fuddiley
Needwood Forests
DEVA
Chester
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no doubt by consciousness of the treachery which was at work among his subjects; he fled to the house of an Ealdorman near Richmond, and was betrayed by him to a thegn whom Oswiu despatched to kill him.[1] The blow broke Aidan's heart; and twelve days after it the bishop lay dying among his brethren at Lindisfarne. Far off, on the sheep-walks of the Lammermoor, a shepherd-boy named Cuthbert, destined afterwards to a wider fame, saw stars falling thick over the sky into the sea, and took them for angels carrying homeward the soul of Bishop Aidan. But the fall of Oswini left Oswiu master of Deira; and Northumbria rose anew from the union of the two northern states, a union which was never henceforth to be dissolved. Oswini was the last male of the old kingly stock of Deira; and with the extinction of their regal line passed away the reluctance of the Deirans to submit to the house of Ida. The restoration of the Northumbrian realm left Oswiu supreme from the Humber to the Forth; and a great part of the Welsh, of the Picts, and of the Scots, on his western and northern border, not only bowed to his overlordship as they had bowed to Oswald's, but even owned their subjection by payment of tribute.[2]

Oswiu and Penda.

But the reconstruction of the Northumbrian kingdom was hardly brought about when a succession of events in Central Britain showed that

[1] Bæda, H. E. iii. c. 14.

[2] Bæda, H. E. ii. 5.

Oswiu had taken up again the wider task of Oswald and Eadwine. In the year after the annexation of Deira, in 652,[1] Penda's son Peada, whom his father had set as under-king over the Middle-English or Leicestermen, sought Oswiu's daughter Alchfleda to wife. The two royal houses were already linked by marriage, for Penda's daughter was the wife of Oswiu's son, Alchfrith; and Alchfrith's persuasion won over Peada to Christianity as the price of his sister's hand. He was baptized by Bishop Finan, Aidan's successor in the See of Lindisfarne,[2] and the priests whom Peada brought back with him preached busily and successfully not only among his own subjects, but ventured in the following year to penetrate even among the Mercians themselves. Penda gave them no hindrance. In words which mark the temper of a man of whom we would willingly know more, Bæda tells us that the old king[3] only "hated and scorned those whom he saw not doing the works of the faith they had received."[4] "They were miserable and scornworthy men," he said, "who shrank from obeying the God in whom they

[1] Bæda does not date the wooing of Peada or the conversion of the Mid-Engle, but as they followed the annexation of Deira and preceded the further attempts to convert the Mercians themselves, which he puts in 653 ("coepta sunt hæc biennio ante mortem Pendæ regis," Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 21), we must assign them to 652.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 21.

[3] If he was fifty at his accession in 626, he was nearly eighty when he fell at the Winwæd.

[4] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 21.

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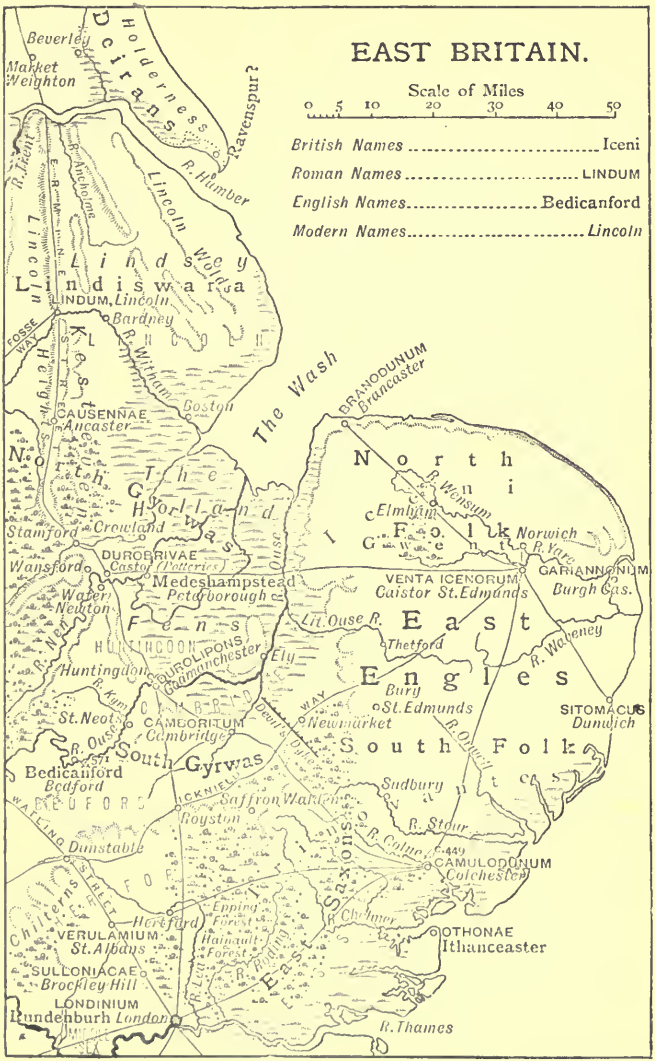
trusted." His attitude proves that Penda looked with the tolerance of his race on all questions of creed, and that he fought not for heathendom, but for independence. If he struck down Eadwine and Oswald, it was not because their missionaries spread along the eastern coast, but because their lordship spread with their missionaries. Quietly therefore as he watched the spread of the new religion among his own people, he may have watched with jealousy the conversion of Essex, which took place in the same year that the Northumbrian preachers appeared on the upper Trent. The throwing off of Christianity and of the Kentish supremacy by the two young kings of the East-Saxons in the days of Bishop Mellitus had been quickly followed by their fall in a disastrous conflict with the West-Sexe;[1] but we do not again catch sight of the little realm till we find at this moment its king Sigeberht a friend and guest of Oswiu's in the king's vill by the Roman Wall. The pressure of Oswiu[2] brought about Sigeberht's baptism and conversion, and his return to his people was followed by Oswiu's despatch of the missionary Cedd, who was working among

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5. The Gewissas may have been tempted to replace Æthelberht's overlordship by their own, or it is possible that the strife sprang simply from the loose and unfixed character of the frontier between the two peoples. (See Stubbs in Dic. Christ. Biog. vol. ii. 20.) The liberty of S. Alban's may represent the waste "mark" between East- and West-Sexe.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 22, "instantia regis Oswiu."



Walker & Boutall sc.

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the Middle-Engle, to this new work on the eastern coast.[1]

The extension of Oswiu's influence over Essex was obviously a prelude to a renewal of the old strife between Penda and Northumbria for the domination over East-Anglia. Now as before the supremacy over East-Anglia was essential to the wider supremacy of Northumbria over the centre of the island. For the new state of Mid-Britain it was more; it was a question of life and death. Without the East-Engle the power which had again and again grouped itself round Æthelberht and Rædwald and Penda must cease to exist. On the other hand the East-Engle were still averse from the rule of their fellow Engle in the west; and now that dependencies of Oswiu's lay on either side of them they would naturally begin to stir. There can be little doubt that Penda's fresh[2] attack on them in 654, an attack in which Sigeberht's successor Anna was slain and his kingdom cruelly ravaged, was the result of a fresh attempt at revolt. A third brother, Æthelhere, bowed anew to the Mercian yoke, and marched among the soldiers of Penda. Æthelhere, we know not how, was the cause of the war[3] which followed with Northumbria. It is possible that the under-king endeavoured to win independence by playing

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 22. Cedd's movements fix the date of these events in 653.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 18. For date, see Hussey's note.

[3] "Auctor ipse belli."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 24.

off the two great powers on either side of him against one another. But that Oswiu strove to avert the conflict we see from the delivery of his youngest son Ecgfrith as a hostage into Penda's hands. The sacrifice however proved useless. Penda was again the assailant, and his attack was as vigorous as of old. He was aided too by internal dissension in the Northumbrian realm. Oidilwald, a son of Oswald, had been set by Oswiu[1] as an under-king over at least part of Deira; but in this crisis he joined the Mercians, and his defection opened a way for Penda's march into the heart of the land.

Battle of the Winwæd.

The old king again passed ravaging over the country as far northward as Bamborough, "destroying all he could with fire and sword;"[2] while Oswiu, unable to meet him in the field, was driven by need to seek for peace. Penda however set roughly aside the gifts which the king offered; he had resolved, so men believed, to root out and destroy the whole people of the Northumbrians. But broken as they were, despair gave strength to the men of the north. A small host gathered round Oswiu, and the king vowed—should the day be his—to give his daughter to God and to found twelve monasteries. "Since the pagan will not take our gifts," he said, "let us offer them to One that will." Success however seemed hope-

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 23, 24.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 17.

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less, for when Oswiu met the Mercian army near the river Winwæd in 655 he found it thrice as strong as his own. Thirty ealdormen followed Penda; Æthelhere brought his East Anglians to his aid, and Oidilwald the men of Eastern Deira. Never had the odds seemed more unequal, but never was an overthrow more complete. Oidilwald proved as faithless to Penda as he had proved to Oswiu; he drew off his men in the midst of the fight and waited for its issue. It ended in the rout and slaughter of the Mercians. Great rains had swelled the river in the rear of their broken host, "and more were drowned in their flight than fell by the sword." But the noblest of the Mercian warriors remained on the field.[1] Of the thirty ealdormen who marched at Penda's bidding hardly one was left alive, Æthelhere fell fighting in the midst of his East-Englishmen, and Penda himself was slain. "In the river Winwæd," rang out the triumphant battle-song of the conquerors:—

"In the river Winwæd is avenged the slaughter of Anna,
The slaughter of the kings Sigberht and Ecgrice,
The slaughter of the kings Oswald and Edwine."[2]

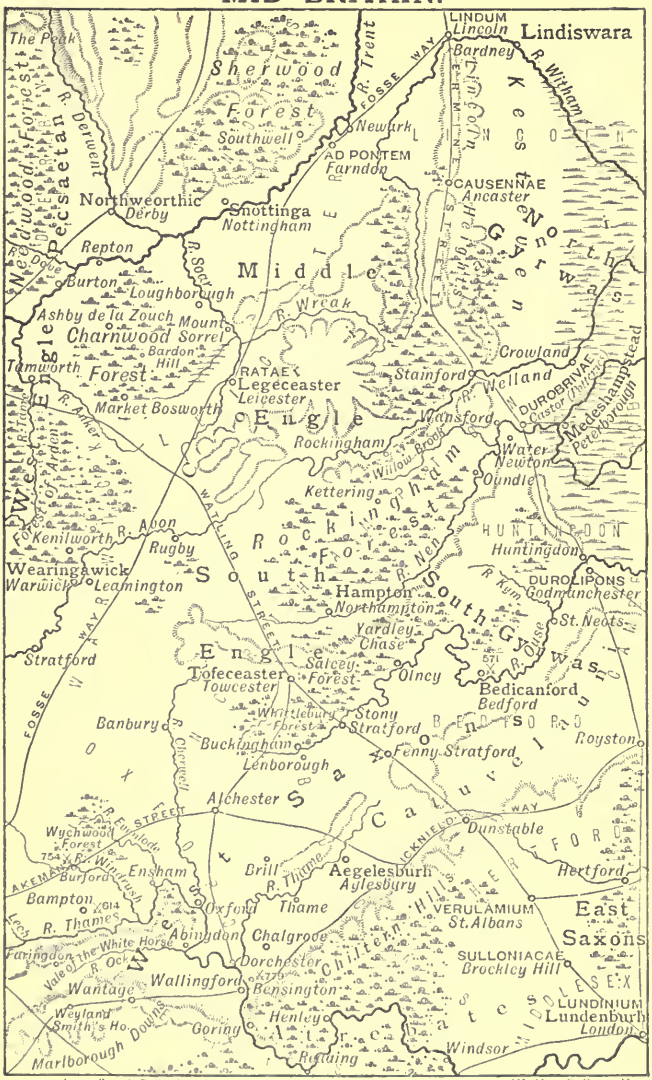
Fall of Mercia.

For the moment the ruin of Mercia seemed complete. The supremacy it had won over its neighbours to the south must have passed away

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib, iii. c. 24.

[2] Huntingdon, Hist. Angl., ed. Arnold, p. 60, has preserved this snatch of English song.

MID BRITAIN.



same scale as South Britain.

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with the great defeat. The West-Saxons resumed their old independence, and the force which they gained from this deliverance spurred them to take up again their long interrupted advance against the Britons in the west. In 652 a victory at Bradford on the Avon drove the Welsh from their stronghold in the woodlands which ran like a wedge into West-Saxon land up the valley of the Frome, and a second campaign six years later settled the West-Saxons as conquerors round the sources of the Parrett. But the loss of outer influence was little beside the internal ruin of the Mercian state itself. The power which had grown up in Central Britain crumbled beneath Oswiu's blow. The peoples whom Penda had brought together sheered off into their old isolation. East-Anglia, the actual prize of the contest, naturally found a new overlord in Oswiu. Lindsey passed under the direct rule of the Northumbrian conqueror, and if the Southumbrians about Nottingham escaped the same fate, it was by their revival as a distinct kingdom, though subject, no doubt, to the overlord in the north. The removal of Peada from his sovereignty over the Middle-English of Leicester shows that these too, probably with their neighbours the South-English of Northampton, were freed from the supremacy of Mercia. The Mercian people itself, reduced as it thus was to its original settlement along the upper Trent, lost its national unity. Its old

division into a North-Mercian and a South-Mercian folk reappeared,[1] whether from civil strife which followed on the great defeat, or as a part of the policy of their conqueror. The larger part of the Mercian people, the North-Mercians who dwelt on the north side of the Trent, were made directly subject to Northumbria. The South-Mercians alone remained under the rule of Peada; but Peada only received his kingship over them as a gift from Oswiu,[2] and that not because he was of the kingly stock, but because he was bound to Oswiu by the ties of his marriage and his Christian faith.

Supremacy of Oswiu.

Oswiu on the other hand was sovereign over Britain as no English king save Eadwine had been before him.[3] The supremacy of Northumbria over the Britons of Cumbria and Strath-Clyde was restored. The Picts and Scots of the north were forced to pay tribute. In Mid-Britain Oswiu no longer saw a power growing fast into a danger, but a mass of broken peoples, all of them in some way owing him obedience. Over Lindsey, the

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 24.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 24: "Donavit (Oswiu) Peada . . . eo quod esset cognatus suus, regnum australium Merciorum."

[3] Bæda, lib. iii. c. 24: "Tribus annis post occisionem Pendan regis, Merciorum genti, necnon et cæteris australium provinciarum populis præfuit, qui etiam gentem Pictorum maxima ex parte regno Anglorum subjecit." So Bæda, H. E. ii. 5, says of Oswiu: "Æqualibus pene terminis (as those of Oswald and Eadwine), regnum nonnullo tempore coercens, Pictorum quoque atque Scottorum gentes, quæ septemtrionales Brittaniæ fines tenent, maximâ ex parte perdomuit ac tributarias fecit."

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men of North-Mercia, and the South-English, he must have ruled for the moment in direct sovereignty;[1] while the petty kingdom of the Southumbrians, the larger realms of the East-Anglians and the East-Saxons, probably the West-Saxons themselves, owned his supremacy. North-umbria itself too was finally made. The royal stock of Deira had come to an end, and with its extinction passed away the strife between the men of Bernicia. From Oswiu's day all the Englishmen of the north were simply Northumbrians, and this inner unity gave fresh weight to the political influence which the kingdom exerted outside its own bounds.

Revival of Mercia.

But the dream of a single people gathered together around the kings of Northumbria no sooner seemed realized than it vanished for ever away. Peada had scarcely received the gift of the South-Mercian realm when his death tempted Oswiu to complete his mastery of Central Britain by annexing even the small folk that the young king had ruled. For three years the Mercians bore this foreign rule; but in 659 the whole people broke out in revolt, drove Oswiu's thegns from the land, and raised a younger son of Penda, who had till now remained in hiding, to the throne.[2] Under its new king, Wulfhere, Mercia rose at once into a

[1] "Ipso (Penda) occiso, cum Oswiu rex Christianus regnum ejus acciperet."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 21.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 24.

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power greater than that of Penda; and which it would need a greater victory than that of the Winwæd to overthrow. But the revolution marked more than the revival of Mercia. It marked the abandonment by Northumbria of her long efforts to carry her supremacy over the rest of Britain. So irresistible had been the movement of revolt that Oswiu seems to have acquiesced without a struggle in the overthrow of his rule, and to have contented himself for the few remaining years of his life with a nominal overlordship across the Humber. Even this passed away at his death in 670; and his successors sank into merely local sovereigns.[1] Whatever bickerings over a border

[1] Bæda, lib. ii., ends his list of those who held an imperium with Oswiu. Æthelberht of Kent "tertius quidem in regibus gentis Anglorum, cuuctis australibus eorum prouinciis quæ Humbræ fluvio et contiguis ei terruinis sequestrantur a borealibus imperavit; sed primus omuium cælestia regna conscendit. Nam priuus imperiuu hujusmodi Ælli rex Australium Saxonum; secuudus Cælin rex Occidentalium Saxonum, qui linguâ eorum Ceaulin vocabatur; tertius, ut dixi, Ædilberct rex Cantuariorum; quartus Reduald rex Orientalium Anglorum, qui etiam viveute Ædilbercto eidem suæ genti ducatum præbebat, obtiuuit; quintus Æduin rex Nordanhymbrorum gentis, id est, ejus quæ ad borealem Humbræ flumiuis plagam iuhabitat, majore potentia cunctis qui Brittaniam iucolunt, Anglorum pariter et Brittonum populis præfuit, præter Cantuariis tantum; necnon et Mevanias Brittouum iusulas, quæ inter Hiberniam et Brittauiam sitæ sunt, Auglorum subjecit imperio; sextus Osuald et ipse Nordanhymbrorum rex Christianissimus, iisdem finibus reguum tenuit; septimus Oswiu frater ejus, æqualibus pene terruinis regnum nonnullo tempore coercens, Pictorum quoque atque Scottorum gentes, quæ septemtrionales Brittaniæ fines teuent, maxima ex parte perdomuit, ac tributarias fecit" (Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5). In the middle of the ninth century the clerk of Wiuchester who threw together the earlier entries of the English Chronicle, when he reached his

province there might be with Mercia, no Northumbrian king from that time made any effort to

entry for the year 827, "In this year king Ecgberht conquered the Mercian kingdom and all that was south of Humber," added, "and he was the eighth king that was Bretwalda." Then copying from Bæda this list of names from Ælla to Oswiu he adds at the close of it, "the eighth was Ecgberht, king of the West-Saxons." The two passages together form the ground of Sir F. Palgrave's theory of a derivation of the Roman imperial authority through Maximus, etc., to Ælla and Ecgberht, which is examined and dismissed by Mr. Freeman ("Norman Conquest," vol. i. appendix, note B), and of Mr. Freeman's own theory of the Bretwaldadom, in which the imperium of Bæda is made to mean "a real though not an abiding or a very well defined supremacy which was often, perhaps generally, held by some one of the Teutonic princes of Britain over as many of his neighbours, Celtic and Teutonic alike, as he could extend it over." The little word Celtic in this very cautiously expressed passage is no doubt big enough to serve as a base for the theory of an imperial character which Mr. Freeman attributes to the rule of the later West-Saxon kings through their supremacy over the Celtic peoples about them. Such a theory in the case of the later monarchy may be true or false; but in applying it to the kings in Bæda's list we seem to me to be going beyond the evidence we possess. As to the title Bretwalda, there is no ground for assuming it to be earlier than the date at which we first find it in the Chronicle, or for giving it, with Swithun's clerk, to these earlier rulers. The silence not only of Bæda but of every historical document or charter up to the ninth century is surely fatal to any theory of its official existence at this time. Nor can we attach any great weight to the historical knowledge of the writer who attributes it to Ælla and Oswiu, when we find that as soon as he comes to the end of Bæda's list the chronicler leaps over a century and a half of our history, and over kings such as Æthelbald and Offa, to pin his own sovereign Ecgberht on to the close of it. But if we set aside the word Bretwalda, and the theories which I believe its incorrect rendering as "ruler of the Britons" first gathered round it, and restrict ourselves to the meaning of Bæda's Imperium, the matter becomes very much simpler. Bæda himself explains the Imperium as a Ducatus, the position that is of a here-toga or war-leader. There is no historic ground in the case of the first four kings in his list for extending such a war-leadership over any

CHAP. VI. crush the rival states in Central or Southern Britain; the threefold division of the conquered Britons at all. In the case of Ælla, indeed, Mr. Freeman admits such a supposition to be impossible. But the passages which show that in Ælla's later days the attacks of the Gewissas on the coast of the Gwent were supported by forces from Kent and Sussex make it at any rate possible that this union of the three peoples in their attack was under the war-leadership of this king, who must at that time have held the highest position among the conquering tribes. Of Ceawlin in this respect we know nothing; but Bæda has carefully defined for us the limits both of Æthelberht's and Rædwald's supremacy, and in neither case is any British people included within it. In their cases the imperium must have meant a supremacy or war-leadership over Englishmen alone; and it is in this sense, therefore, that we must apply the word to Eadwine, Oswald, and Oswin, though these three Northumbrian kings undoubtedly had British peoples among their tributaries. I am inclined to think that the chronicler's entry came about in a very simple way. In the passage of Bæda which lay before him he read that Æthelberht, "cunctis australibus eorum provinciis qui Humbræ fluvio et contiguis ei terminis sequestrantur a borealibus imperavit." Here, as in so many cases throughout his book, Bæda is distinguishing between the "Nordanhymbri" and the "Sudanhymbri," the Engle north of the Humber, and the Engle south of it, to the exclusion of the Kentishmen and the various Saxon tribes. What he points out is, that it was over the southern Engle—the Engle, that is, of Mid-Britain or the later Mercia—that Æthelberht's imperium extended, and it was over the same district that Rædwald's imperium extended after him. Now if we look at the chronicler's entry we shall see that it was not when the Kentishmen submitted to him in 823, or when he completed his conquests by the annexation of Northumbria, that the writer tags Ecgberht on to the Bretwaldas, but when in the interval between them he conquered "the kingdom of the Mercians and all that was south of the Humber." The chronicler's own words probably recalled to him Bæda's phrase about an imperium over "all the provinces south of the Humber," and in a very natural, if pedantic, way he at once linked on his hero to the list of Bæda's seven kings. This would account for his omission of names like that of Offa, so startling to Mr. Kemble; for from Oswiu's day to Ecgberht's day no one had made this particular conquest of Mercia, just because Mercia during this period had been the dominant power in Southern Britain.

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land was accepted as a settled fact by the statesmen of the north; and if they henceforth sought to widen their borders it was not by conquests over Englishmen, but by conquests over Cumbrian or Pict.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOMS

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The Church and the Nation.

WITH the failure of Northumbria the union of the conquerors of Britain in a single nation for the time became impossible. Far as the northern kingdom surpassed the rest in political and military development, half a century of bitter struggle had failed to reveal in it such a preponderance of power as would force the states south of the Humber to bow to its permanent supremacy. That Mercia or Wessex should succeed where Northumbria had failed was as yet out of the question, and when Oswiu's realm withdrew into practical isolation, all hope of national union seemed to vanish away. But at this moment a new element began to play its part in English life. The battle of the Winwæd had proved a delusive triumph for Northumbria. But it was a decisive victory for the Cross. With it all active resistance on the part of the older

heathendom came to an end. Christianity, which had gradually won recognition as a state religion in northern, eastern, and southern Britain, became with the submission of Mercia the faith of the New England at large; and the worship of Woden only lingered for a few years to come in the petty and isolated kingdom of the South Saxons, which lay severed from the rest of the island by the Andredsweald. The religious hopes of Gregory were realized in the subjection of Britain to the new faith, and the time had come for the carrying out of those plans which he had devised for its ecclesiastical administration. Nothing was more characteristic of Roman Christianity than its administrative organization. Its ordered hierarchy of bishops, priests, and lower clergy, its judicial and deliberative machinery, its courts and its councils, had become a part of its very existence, and settled with it on every land that it won. Gregory, as we have seen, had plotted out the yet heathen Britain into an ordered Church with two archbishopries, each surrounded by twelve suffragan sees; and though the carrying out of this scheme in its actual form had proved impossible, yet it was certain that the first effort of the Roman see, now that the ground was clear, would be to replace it by some analogous arrangement. But no such religious organization could stamp itself on English soil without telling on the civil organization about it. The regular subordination of priest to bishop,

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of bishop to primate, in the administration of the Church, would supply a mould on which the civil organization of the state would unconsciously but irresistibly shape itself. The gatherings of the clergy in national synods would inevitably lead the way to national gatherings for civil legislation. Above all, if the nation in its spiritual capacity came to recognize the authority of a single primate, it would insensibly be led in its temporal capacity to recognize a single sovereign.

The Church in the North.

But the hopes of such an organization rested in the submission of the English states to the Church of Rome, and it was not the Church of Rome which had won the victory of the Winwæd, or which seemed likely to reap its fruits. After its efforts at extension under Æthelberht and Eadwine, the Roman mission had for a while sunk into a mere church of Kent; and though the Burgundian Felix, who had taken the lead in a mission to East-Anglia,[1] and Birinus, with his successor, the Frankish Bishop Agilberct, who were preaching in Wessex,[2] were both attached to the Roman communion, the recent and imperfect conversion of these countries gave them as yet little weight in the religious balance of the country. The real life and energy of the new Christianity were concentrated in the north, and the north looked for its religious centre, not to Rome, but to

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 15.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.

Ireland. Never was the connexion of Britain with Ireland closer than in the years that followed Penda's fall. The spell which it cast over Northumbria was irresistible.[1] To cross the Irish Channel, whether for piety or for learning, became a fashion in the north,[2] while fresh missionaries streamed over in turn to wander into the wildest spots where English heathendom found a hold. One solitary made his way as far as the South Saxons.[3] Another settled among the East Englishmen, and left his memory to a monastery in Suffolk.[4] Nor was the Northumbrian Church itself wanting in missionaries as ardent as these. The brothers Cedd and Ceadda, one the apostle of Essex,[5] the other of the Mercians, the St. Chad to whom the Mercian see of Lichfield still looks as its founder, were only instances of the zeal of their day. So simple and lowly in temper was Ceadda that he travelled on foot in his mission journeys till Archbishop Theodore in later days lifted him with his own hands on horseback. The poetry of their early Christian enthusiasm breaks out in the death-legend that tells how voices of singers singing sweetly descended from

[1] We see an amusing proof of this in Bæda's statement that he had seen persons bitten by serpents cured by drinking water into which scrapings of the leaves of books that had been brought out of Ireland had been put. (Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 1.)

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. 7.; iv. 3, 4; v. 9, 10.

[3] Dicul. Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 13.

[4] Fursey. Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 19.

[5] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 22, 23.

heaven to a little cell beside St. Mary's church where the Mercian bishop lay dying. Then the "same song ascended from the roof again, and returned heavenward by the same way that it came."[1]

Cuthbert.

But the work of these missionaries has been almost lost in the glory of Cuthbert.[2] No story better lights up for us the religious life of the time than the story of this apostle of the Lowlands, a story that carries us into the northernmost part of Northumbria, into the country of the Teviot and the Tweed. Born on the southern edge of the Lammermoor, a line of dark uplands which runs eastward to the sea at Dunbar, Cuthbert found shelter at eight years old in the house of a widow who dwelt in the village of Wrangholm. In after years he loved to tell stories of his boyhood, of the strength and agility which made him the best runner and wrestler among the village children, of his quickness of wit, his love of laughter and fun.[3] But already his robust frame hid a poetic sensibility which caught even in the chance word of a game a call to higher things. An attack of lameness deepened the

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 3

[2] For Cuthbert we have (*a*) an anonymous life by a contemporary (in Bæda, Opera Minora, ed. Stevenson, p. 259); (*b*) a life by Bæda, in some measure drawn from this, but with fresh information from contemporaries (in the same volume, p. 49); and Bæda's abstract of the latter in his Ecclesiastical History, lib. iv. c. 27.

[3] Anon. Vit. p. 261.


BRITAIN NORTH OF THE WASH.
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50
British Names.... Brigantes, Bryneich
Roman Names.... EBORACUM
English Names.... Eoforwick
Modern Names.... York
Firth of Forth
Tyningham
St. Abbs Hd.
Coldingham
Lammermoor
Selkirk
Lindisfarne
Holy I.
Bebbanburh
Bamborough
R. Coquet
R. Wansbeck
SEGEDUNUM, Wallsend
Jarrow
Wearmouth
R. Tees
Hartlepool
Cliffland
Cleveland
Strenaeskhalc
Whitby
CATARACTONIUM
Catterick
Richmond
York-Moors
Lastingham
Vale of Pickering
DERVENTIO
Malton
Flamborough Head
Ripon
Kings Scaur
Settle
Aldborough
Deïrans
EBORACUM
Eoforwick
York
Wolds
Hilley
CALCARIA
Raelcaceaster
Tadcaster
Ribchester
Goodmanham
Beverley
Ravenspurr
Market Weighton
LEGIOLUM
Castleford
Stamford
Hatfield
DANUM
Doncaster
MANCUNIUM
Manchester
Bawtrey
Gainsborough
Lindsey
LINDUM
Lincoln
DEVA
Chester
Fethanleah
Faddiley
Sherwood Forest
Southwell
Newark
Boston
Northwerthic
Derby
ADPONTEM
Snottinga
Nottingham
CAUSENNAE
Ancaster
Maserfield
Old Oswestry
Baschurch
Pen-wyrn
Shrewsbury
URICONIUM
Wroxeter
Repton
RATAE, Leircester
Leicester
Stamford
Walker & Boutall sc.

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religious impression. It was for his sins, the boy thought, that God had chained and bound him; and a rider who came one day over the hill, mounted on a fine horse, and clad in the graceful white riding cloak which was common among the nobles of the time, seemed as he pitied and tended the injured limb an angel sent to bring forgiveness and health.[1] From that time Cuthbert's bent was to a religious life. It was of this he dreamed as he kept his master's sheep on the bleak uplands whence the Leader flows into the Tweed, uplands still famous as a sheep-walk, though a scant herbage scarce veils the whinstone rock.[2] We see him for a while keeping watches of prayer in the night while his comrades sleep around, or in lonelier hours breaking the stillness of the heights with hymns, or seeing in splendour of falling stars and northern lights angel-troops ascending and descending between earth and heaven. The news which was "noised far and wide" of Bishop Aidan's death woke him from this dream-life, and in 651 he made his way to a group of straw-thatched log-huts in the midst of an untilled solitude where a few Irish monks from Lindisfarne had settled in the mission-station of Melrose.[3]

[1] Anon. Vit. p. 262.

[2] Anon. Vit. p. 263.

[3] Anon. p. 264, 267, Bæda's Life, c. vi. This was not on the site of the present abbey, but at the spot known as "Old Melrose." "On a green sheltered slope, a little below the point where the Tweed receives the scanty waters of the Leader, and

To-day the land is a land of poetry and romance. Cheviot and Lammermoor, Ettrick and Teviotdale, Yarrow and Annan-water, are musical with old ballads and border minstrelsy. Agriculture has chosen its valleys for her favourite seat, and drainage and steam-power have turned sedgy marshes into farm and meadow. But to see the Lowlands as they were in Cuthbert's day we must sweep meadow and farm away again, and replace them by vast solitudes, dotted here and there with clusters of wooden hovels, and crossed by boggy tracks along which travellers rode spear in hand, and eye kept cautiously about them.[1] Though the new religion had already its adherents even in remote villages, the Northumbrian peasantry were for the most part Christians only in name. With the general religious indifference of their race they had yielded to their thegns in nominally accepting the new belief, as these had yielded to the king. But they retained their old superstitions side by side with the new worship; plague or mishap drove them back to a reliance on

then takes a bold semicircular sweep under the wood and rocks of Bemerside" (Raine, "Dictionary of Christian Biography," i. 725). Thence after a few years he went to Ripon with his abbot Eata, to whom King Alchfrid had given ground there for a monastery, but was expelled in 661 by Wilfrid, and returned to Melrose to face the pestilence. In 664, after the Synod of Whitby, he was sent as Prior to Lindisfarne, and after staying there twelve years (664–676) withdrew to the Isle of Farne. It was these later years at Melrose and Lindisfarne that formed the time of his main mission work.

[1] Bæda, "Life of Cuthbert," c. vi.

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their heathen charms and amulets; and if trouble befell the Christian preachers who came settling among them they took it as proof of the wrath of the older gods. When some log-rafts which were floating down the Tyne for the construction of an abbey at its mouth drifted with the monks who were at work on them out to sea, the rustic bystanders shouted "Let nobody pray for them; let nobody pity these men, who have taken away from us our old worship; and how their new-fangled customs are to be kept nobody knows."[1] While Oswiu was nerving himself for the struggle with Penda, Cuthbert wandered among listeners such as these, choosing above all the remoter mountain villages from whose roughness and poverty other teachers turned aside. Unlike his Irish comrades, the missionaries who had followed Aidan, he needed no interpreter as he passed from village to village; the frugal, long-headed Northumbrians listened willingly to one who was himself a peasant of the Lowlands and who had caught the rough Northumbrian burr along the banks of the Tweed. His patience, his humorous good sense, the sweetness of his look, told for him, and not less the vigorous frame which fitted the peasant-preacher for the hard life he had chosen. "Never did man die of hunger who served God faithfully," he would say when nightfall found them supperless in the waste. "Look at the eagle overhead! God

[1] Bæda, "Life of Cuthbert," c. iii.

can feed us through him if He will"—and once at least he owed his meal to a fish that the scared bird let fall.[1] At another time a snowstorm drove his boat on the coast of Fife. "The snow closes the road along the shore," mourned his comrades; "the storm bars our way over sea." "There is still the way of heaven that lies open," said Cuthbert.

Severance of the Churches

But poetic as was its temper, and unwearied as was the energy which it showed in the work of conversion, the success of the Irish Church threatened Britain with both political and religious ills. The Celtic Church, as we have seen in its own Irish home, was utterly devoid of that power of organization which was the strength of the Church of Rome. Hundreds of wandering bishops, a vast religious authority wielded by hereditary chieftains, an inextricable confusion of tribal quarrels and ecclesiastical controversies in which the clergy, robbed of all really spiritual influence, contributed no element save that of disorder to the state, a wild jungle-growth of asceticism which dissociated piety from morality, and the absence of those larger and more humanizing influences which a wider world alone can give, this is the picture which the Irish Church of later times presents to us. Nor would the Irish Church in Northern Britain have found very different fortunes. It had brought with it the purely monastic system of its home; and great as

[1] Bæda, "Life of Cuthbert." c. 12.

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were its missionary labours, it showed no trace of any power of moulding the new Christianity into an ordered form. But even had it shown such a power, its permanent establishment would have been none the less disastrous. The religious unity of the English race would in fact have been broken even more fatally than its political unity was broken. To the Church of the Roman obedience—to the church, that is, of Kent, East Anglia, and Wessex—the Irish Church seemed as schismatic as the Church of Wales. Both alike held aloof from any definite submission to the Church of Rome; both clung to a tonsure of their own; both kept Easter at a season different from that of the rest of the Christian world. The difference sprang simply from the long severance of the Celtic churches from the general body of Christendom; but when the conversion of Britain removed the barrier which isolated them, and again brought them face to face with the West, its real origin was lost in the fanatical hatred with which the Roman ecclesiastics denounced these usages, and the no less fanatical obstinacy with which the Irish ecclesiastics clung to them. To the one side the Irish tonsure was the tonsure of Simon Magus, the Irish Easter a Jewish Passover. To the other the tonsure was the tonsure of Columba, their Easter a tradition of St. John. So long as both rivals were threatened with the triumph of heathendom under Penda, any strife between

them seems to have been carefully avoided. But with the disappearance of this common danger a collision became inevitable; and the continuance of both as equal powers on English soil must have torn Englishmen asunder more fatally than political parting.

Approach of the strife.

Even in the years that preceded his final struggle with Penda, Oswiu had been forced to watch anxiously the first signs of a gathering storm which was to end in open conflict between the churches. The storm was roused by the very step which he took to secure his rule in Deira, for if his marriage furthered the political union of the two northern realms, religiously it added a new element of discord to them. Eanfled brought with her the Roman traditions and the Roman allegiance of the Church of Kent.[1] An exile in the south from her childhood, she had known nothing of Aidan or his fellow-workers in the north; while to the men among whom she lived the Church from which Aidan came seemed simply schismatic. Through the heathen reaction after Eadwine's fall, and through the reign of Oswald, a deacon named James,[2] the sole relic of the church of Paulinus, had preserved the Roman usage in Deira: and he had instructed many in it "as the days brightened around him." James however might have lived on unheeded had not the coming of Eanfled given a new and powerful

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.

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impulse to the movement. A Roman party at once formed about her. She brought with her a priest of the Roman Church in Kent, and observed the Roman Easter. While Oswiu with his people kept the Easter feast at the date fixed by his Irish missionaries, Eanfled—it was whispered—was still fasting for Lent.[1]

Benedict Biscop.

So long however as Aidan lived the reverence in which he was held hushed the faint whisper of coming strife. But with his death began the stirrings of two men who were destined to bring it quickly to a head. Born in the very year of Oswald's victory at the Hevenfeld, Wilfrid[2] had been sent in boyhood to study at Lindisfarne.[3] But in the very centre of Irish influence he felt the spell of Rome; and young as he was, he resolved to visit the Imperial City.[4] The thought sprang doubtless from the suggestion of Eanfled, to whom he was known, and who sent him in 652, the year after Oswiu's conquest of Deira, with letters of protection to her cousin King Earconberht of Kent.[5] The same craving was stirring in the heart of Benedict Biscop, a thegn of Oswiu's

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 25.

[2] For Wilfrid we have a biography by Eddi, in "Historians of the Church of York," ed. Raine, vol. i., and a more temperate statement in Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 19. Benedict Biscop's life is the first in Bæda's "Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow" (printed at end of Hussey's edition of Eccl. Hist.).

[3] Eddi, c. 2.

[4] Eddi, c. 3.

[5] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 19.

court; and the two young men, for Benedict was but five and twenty and Wilfrid seventeen, met in Kent, and crossed the sea together on their Roman pilgrimage. Wilfrid however remained at Lyons on his way, and Benedict alone reached Rome; but the sight of the city kindled in him a fervour which showed itself on his return a year later in ceaseless preaching against the Irish usages. Oswiu's son, Alchfrid, who had been raised to a share in his father's royalty, was stirred at last to vow the same pilgrimage,[1] and though he was unable to carry out his vow, his accession to the Roman party at once raised the quarrel of the churches into a grave political question. But harassing as was this growing strife, the attention of Oswiu was absorbed in a struggle for life till the fall of Penda; and after the victory of the Winwæd all thought of the little group of ecclesiastical rebels who clustered round Eanfled and Alchfrid was lost in the spiritual triumph of the church of Lindisfarne. Finan had followed Aidan as bishop at Holy Island:[2] and the years of his bishopric were years of a wonderful activity. If Wessex was won by a Roman missionary, the winning of Central Britain, the reconquest of Essex, the first evangelization even of the wild South-Saxons, were the work of missionaries from the Celtic church of the north.

[1] Bæda, Vit. Abbatum, p. 317.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 17.

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Wilfrid.

But Alchfrid and Eanfled remained steadily at the head of their Roman party; and the efforts of Benedict Biscop were soon reinforced by the arrival of a worker yet more dogged and energetic. This was Wilfrid, whom he had left behind in Gaul, and who now returned after two visits to Rome to combat what he denounced as the schism of Northumbria.[1] Young as he was, and he was still only a few years over twenty, Wilfrid's energy proved him a valuable ally, and Alchfrid set him as abbot in 661 over a house which he had founded some years before at Ripon. The house had been an offshoot from Melrose, and Cuthbert was among the brethren who had come from Tweed-side to dwell there; but to the young abbot these brethren were schismatics, and he drove them out.[2] Their expulsion brought the quarrel to a head; for the strife was hotly taken up by Finan's successor, Bishop Colman of Lindisfarne; while Alchfrid summoned to Wilfrid's aid Bishop Agilberet, a Frank missionary who had been called after the death of Birinus to the see of the West-Saxons. There is no ground, however, for believing that the efforts of the Roman party would have been more successful than of old had Oswiu continued to support the church of Lindisfarne. Hitherto his support had been vigorous and unwavering. Whatever might be the hostility of his wife and son, the king re-

[1] Eddi, c. 7. [2] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 19.

mained true to the church which had given shelter to the sons of Æthelfrith in the days of their exile. He had learned to speak Irish during his stay at Hii,[1] and his sympathy went with the Irish clergy around him; he loved Bishop Colman as his brother Oswald had loved Bishop Aidan.[2] The house indeed which he had just founded at Streoneshealh as a thankoffering for his victory at the Winwæd was framed on the model of the house at Holy Island.

Synod at Whitby.

But a marked change of temper was seen when he summoned a synod at Whitby in 664 for the settlement of the disputed questions.[3] The forces as they faced one another still seemed strangely unequal. The Roman party consisted, as of old, of none but Alchfrid, Bishop Agilberct with his chaplain Agatho, the deacon James, and Abbot Wilfrid, for Benedict was on his way to Rome. On the other side were the representatives of almost the whole church of Northumbria, Bishop Colman, the East-Saxon Bishop Cedd who acted as interpreter, the brethren of Lindisfarne, Abbess Hild and the brethren and sisters of the very house in which the synod was gathered. Above all, the Irish party looked for aid to Oswiu himself, who presided over the mixed assembly of clergy and thegns. His first words however

[1] "Oswiu . . . illorum etiam linguâ optime imbutus."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 25. [2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 26.
[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 25.

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showed the drift of the king's policy. The disputed questions he submitted to the judgment of the council. But he pressed earnestly for uniformity; and his resolve to obtain it was seen in his significant interference at the close of the debate. Colman pleaded hotly for the Irish fashion of the tonsure and for the Irish time of keeping Easter. Wilfrid's plea for the Roman, learned and eloborate as was its form, condensed itself in the single argument which he saw had weight with the king. "You fight," he said, "against the whole world."[1] Still the debate went on. The one disputant appealed to the authority of Columba, the other to that of St. Peter. "You own," cried the king at last to Colman, "that Christ gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven—has he given such power to Columba?" The bishop could but answer "No." "Then will I rather obey the porter of Heaven," said Oswiu, "lest when I reach its gates he who has the keys in his keeping turn his back on me, and there be none to open." The humorous form of Oswiu's decision could not hide its importance; and the synod had no sooner broken up than Colman, followed by the whole of the Irish-born brethren and thirty of their English fellows, forsook the see of Aidan and sailed away to Hii.

[1] "Contra totum orbem . . . . pugnant."—Beda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 25.

It is possible that lesser political motives may have partly swayed Oswiu in his decision; for the revival of Mercia had left him but the alliance of Kent in the south, and this victory of the Kentish Church would draw tighter the bonds which linked together the two powers. But we may fairly credit him with a larger statesmanship. Trivial in fact as were the actual points of difference which parted the Roman Church from the Irish, the question to which communion Northumbria should belong was, as we have seen, of immense moment to the after fortunes of England. It was not merely that, as Wilfrid said, to fight against Rome was to fight against the world. Had England indeed clung to the Irish Church, it must have remained spiritually isolated from the bulk of Western Christendom. Fallen as Rome might be from its older greatness, it preserved the traditions of civilization, of letters and art and law. Its faith still served as a bond which held together the nations that sprang from the wreck of the Empire. To repulse Rome was to condemn England to isolation. But grave as such considerations were, they were of little weight beside the influence which Oswiu's decision had on the very unity of the English race. The issue of the synod not only gave England a share in the religious unity of Western Christendom, it gave her a religious unity at home. However dimly such thoughts may have presented themselves to Oswiu's mind, it was the instinct of a

CHAP. VII. statesman that led him to set aside the love and gratitude of his youth, and to secure the religious oneness of England in the Synod of Whitby.

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From the Channel to the Firth of Forth the English Church was now a single religious body within the obedience of Rome, and the time had come for carrying out those plans of organization which Rome had conceived from the first moment of Augustine's landing. The actual scheme of ecclesiastical government indeed which Gregory had then devised had broken down before the stress of facts. Of his two contemplated archbishoprics, York made as yet no claim to a primacy, while London gave way to the claims of Canterbury as the see of Augustine, as the mother-church of Britain, above all as the bishopric of the one realm which had from the first remained Christian, the kingdom of Kent. Canterbury had become the natural centre of ecclesiastical life, now that the life called for such a centre for its development. The choice of its Primate thus became all important, and when the death of Archbishop Deusdedit in the plague of 664 left the see of Canterbury vacant, Oswiu as still exercising some nominal supremacy over Britain, and Ecgberht of Kent, as king of the actual diocese, joined in selecting a priest named Wighard for the post and in sending him for consecration to Rome. The selection of Wighard, following on that of Deusdedit, was in itself a notable step

The Primacy.

towards the nationalization of the church, for Wighard, like his predecessor in the primacy, was an Englishman. Though seventy years had passed since Augustine's arrival, neither he nor the Roman missionaries who followed him, Laurentius, Mellitus, Justus, or Honorius, had acquired the English tongue; and throughout their primacy the Kentish kings had been forced, like Æthelberht, to gather what they could of their teaching through the means of interpreters. It marked the rise of a keener sense of nationality when Ecgberht, with Oswiu's assent, resolved to have "a bishop of his own race and his own tongue."[1]

Theodore.

Wighard however died of plague on his arrival at Rome, and Pope Vitalian, interpreting the request of the kings for the consecration of the primate they had selected as a request to find them a primate[2] in any case, selected in Wighard's place a Neapolitan abbot of African race named Hadrian. Hadrian, however, refused the offer of so distant a see,[3] and it was with some difficulty that the Pope at last found an archbishop in

[1] "Cupiens eum sibi Romæ ordinari episcopum, quatenus suæ gentis et linguæ habens antistitem, tanto perfectius, eum subjectis sibi populis, vel verbis imbueretur fidei vel mysteriis, quanto hæc non per interpretem, sed per cognati et contribulis viri linguam simul manumque susciperet."—Bæda, Vit. Abbatum. Hussey's Bæda, p. 317. The "contribulis" is emphatic too, for Deusdedit had been a West-Saxon.

[2] See Vitalian's letter. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 111, 112, with the editor's note.

[3] "Antistitem," says Vitalian to Oswiu, "minime valuimus nunc reperire pro longinquitate itineris."

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Theodore, an eastern monk born at Tarsus in Cilicia, a man famous for his learning and piety, but who had already reached the age of sixty-six. Aged however as he was, Theodore was kept four months in Rome till his eastern tonsure could be superseded by a tonsure in the correct Roman fashion, and the characteristic caution of the Roman court was seen in its despatch of Hadrian as his companion lest any shade of Greek heterodoxy should be introduced by the new primate into Britain.[1] The result of these delays, and of a long detention in Gaul during his journey, was that Theodore did not land in Kent till the May of 669.

Mercia under Wulfhere.

The Britain which he found on his arrival had become in the interval a very different country from the Britain which we last surveyed after the battle of the Winwæd. Northumbria, which then seemed supreme over the whole English race, had now retired within her own bounds across the Humber, and retained none of her conquests to the south of that river save the territory of the Lindiswaras. Mercia on the other hand, which then seemed utterly destroyed, had risen into a greatness it had never known before. If it left for a time Lindsey to Northumbria, it reft from that kingdom the district south of the Mersey,

[1] "Ut ei doctrinæ cooperator existens, diligenter adtenderet ne quid ille contrarium veritati fidei, Græcorum more, in ecclesiam cui præesset, introduceret."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 1.

and with it at least the site and port of Chester.[1] In Mid-Britain East-Anglia may still have held aloof from Wulfhere, but in all other quarters the realm of Penda seems to have been quickly restored. Even the territory of the Hwiccas, which had been the spoil of the victory at Cirencester, again found itself in the Mercian grasp; for Wulfhere's rule was not only owned in the Severn valley, but embraced the lower valley of the Wye. In this region, our Herefordshire, Wulfhere set his brother Merewald as an under-king.[2] But he did more than restore his father's realm. The renewed activity of the West-Saxons, which had shown itself in their recent victories over the Britons on their south-western frontier, may have led to some fresh attempts to recover the lost territory of the Hwiccas, but whatever was the cause of the conflict between Cenwealh's host and that of Wulfhere in 661, it ended in so decisive a victory for the Mercians that their ravages extended into the heart of Wessex as far as Ashdown.[3] It was probably this triumph which enabled Wulfhere to carry his arms into the valley of the Thames. To the eastward the

[1] We have no record of this conquest or of its date; but from this time we find Cheshire and the country as far as the Mersey in Mercian hands.

[2] "Germanus vero ipsius, Westan-Hecanorum rex, sanctus Merewaldus."—Flor. Worc. Geneal. i. 265. The Hwiccas were in the same way ruled by Subreguli; in the next Mercian reign Oshere is "Hwicciorum subregulus."—Flor. Worc. Geneal. i. 239.

[3] Engl. Chron. a. 661.

Walker & Boutall sc.

East-Saxons and London came to own his supremacy;[1] while southwards he pushed across the river and over Surrey, which we find governed by an under-king of his appointment,[2] into Sussex. The wild Saxon tribe which was sheltered by the Weald may have sought his overlordship as a protection from the more pressing attacks of the West-Saxons; in 661, at any rate, their king Æthelwalch was baptized in Wulfhere's presence and by his persuasion;[3] and his submission was rewarded by a gift of two outlying settlements of the Jutes, the Isle of Wight and the lands of the Meon-wara along the Southampton Water, which we must suppose had been previously torn from Wessex by the arms of the Mercian king.

Theodore in Britain.

The Mercian supremacy, which thus reached from the Humber to the Channel, and stretched as far westward as the Wye, while on the eastern coast East-Anglia and Kent, though still independent, lay helpless and isolated in its grasp, was thus the main political fact in Britain when Theodore landed on its shores. He came with a clear and distinct aim—the organization of the English dioceses, the grouping of these subordinate centres round the see of Canterbury, and the

[1] Wini bought the Bishopric of London from Wulfhere. (Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.) For Essex, Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 30.

[2] Malmesbury, Gest. Pontif. lib. ii. sec. 96. For the Chertsey charters, see article on Erkenwald, by Stubbs, in "Dictionary of Christian Biography," vol. ii

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 13.

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bringing the church which was thus organized into a fixed relation to Western Christendom through its obedience to the see of Rome. With this purpose he spent the three years which followed his arrival, from 669 to 672, in journeying through the whole island.[1] Wherever he went he secured obedience to Rome by enforcing the Roman observance of Easter and the other Roman rites, while his very presence brought about for himself a recognition of his primacy over the nation at large. As yet no archbishop had crossed the bounds of Kent, and to the rest of Britain the primate at Canterbury must have seemed a mere provincial prelate like the rest. But the presence of Theodore in Northumbria, in Mercia, in Wessex alike, the welcome he everywhere received, the reverence with which he was everywhere listened to, at once raised his position into a national one.[2] "He," says Bæda, "was the first of the archbishops whom the whole English Church consented to obey;"[3] and everywhere he went he asserted this new position of the primacy by an ordering, though, as we shall see, only a preliminary ordering, of the English dioceses.

Some ordering was absolutely needful. So

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2: "Peragratâ insulâ totâ, quaqua-versum Anglorum gentes morabantur."

[2] "Nam et libentissime ab omnibus suscipiebatur atque audiebatur."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2.

[3] "Is ue primus erat in Archiepiscopis, cui omnis Anglorum Ecclesia manus dare consentiret."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2,

Ordering of dioceses.

great a confusion had been produced by the contest between the churches, that to hot partisans on either side some of the English bishops seemed no bishops at all; and Wilfrid, when named to the see of York, had cast an open slur on the validity of his fellow-prelates' orders by crossing over the Channel to seek consecration from the bishops of Gaul.[1] Nor was this the worst. Two of the English dioceses, those of Wessex and Northumbria, had not for some years seen the presence of any bishop. In Wessex king Cenwealh had quarrelled with bishop Agilberct, driven him as a foreigner from the realm, and set Wini as bishop in his stead. Then in 666 he had in turn driven Wini from his see and left Wessex without any bishop at all.[2] On the other hand, Wilfrid, who had gone to Gaul for his consecration, had delayed his return so long, that Oswiu set Ceadda as bishop in his place; and after three years' retirement at Ripon he had withdrawn to the south, and was actually administering the vacant diocese of Kent when Theodore arrived there.[3] Wilfrid, however, was now placed in his northern diocese, and Leutherius, a nephew of Agilberct, was drawn from Gaul to fill the bishopric of the West-Saxons,[4] while Theodore solved the vexed question of their disputed orders by reconsecrating Bisi as

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 28.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.
[3] Eddi, "Life of Wilfrid," c. 14; Bæda, H. E. iv. 2.
[4] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.

bishop over East-Anglia, and Ceadda as bishop of Mercia.[1] Wini remained at London in his diocese of the East-Saxons, which he had bought from Wulfhere in 666,[2] and the placing of his own under-bishop, Putta, at Rochester completed Theodore's first ordering of the English episcopate.

Council of Hertford.

In the autumn of 673 this earlier work was completed by the calling together of these bishops with their leading clergy in a council at Hertford.[3] The decrees of this council formed a further step in Theodore's work of settlement, for by them each bishop with his clergy was restricted within the limits of his own diocese, and the free wandering of the earlier English mission-bishops over the face of the country was brought to an end.[4] A yet more important canon enacted that this synod at Hertford should be but the first of a series of such synods, and that the bishops should meet each year at the close of July in a spot which bore the name of Cloveshoe.[5] It is as the first of these assemblies that the council of Hertford is so important in our history. The synods to which its canons gave birth not only exerted an im-

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2, 3. "Denuo catholica ratione consummavit."—Flor. Worc. a. 673.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 7.

[3] Wini, however, was not present at this council.

[4] For council of Hertford, see Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," vol. iii. pp. 118-122.

[5] For the various localities to which this name has been assigned, see Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 122, note.

portant influence on the church itself, but they exerted a yet more powerful influence upon the nation at large. At every important juncture the new bishops gathered round their primate from every quarter in England, to take counsel and frame canons for the rule of the church at large. They met, not as Northumbrian or Mercian or Saxon bishops, but as bishops of a national church. These meetings were in fact the first of our national gatherings for general legislation; for it was at a much later time that the Wise Men of Wessex, or Northumbria, or Mercia, learned to come together in the Witenagemot of all England. The synods which Theodore convened as religiously representative of the whole English nation led the way by their example to our national parliament, while the canons which these councils enacted, though carefully avoiding all direct intermeddling with secular matters, pointed the way to a national system of law. How strong an influence this work would exert on English feeling, the next hundred years were to show. It was in vain that during that period state after state strove to build up the fabric of a national unity by the power of the sword. But in spite of their failure the drift towards unity grew more and more irresistible. If England could not find its national life in the supremacy of Northumbria or Mercia, it found it in the church; and amidst the wreck of kingdoms the power of the church grew steadily greater,

CHAP. VII. The Church and the Kingdoms. 659-690. The school at Canterbury.

because the church alone expressed the national consciousness of the English people.[1]

In the journeys of these three years throughout Britain Theodore had found a companion and fellow-worker in his friend Hadrian. But he found in him a fellow-worker in more than this task of organization. Both of the friends were famous for their knowledge as well as their piety,[2] and one of their earliest efforts seems to have been to gather a school at Canterbury. As yet the knowledge which came in the train of the new faith had filtered into Britain through the wandering Irishmen, half-scholars, half-missionaries, who settled in lonely spots, and then eked out their living by the learners they drew about them.[3] Such teaching, however, was necessarily wanting in permanence; and a new and settled form was given to English education by the establishment of such a school as that of Canterbury. Though its main teaching was in subjects that related to the knowledge either of the Bible or of the services of the church, yet this scheme of education proved broad enough to embrace the astronomy,

[1] For the work of Theodore, and the character of the new English Church, see Stubbs, Const. Hist. vol. i. chap. viii.

[2] The Pope in a synodical letter calls Theodore "archiepiscopum et philosophum."—Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. p. 140. "Literis sacris simul et sæcularibus abundanter ambo erant instructi."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2.

[3] Thus Maidulf, "deficientibus necessariis scholares in discipulatum accepit, ut eorum liberalitate tenuitatem victus corrigeret."—Malm. Vit. Aldhelmi, "Anglia Sacra," vol. ii. p. 3; "Gesta Pontificum," Rolls ed. p. 334.

the arithmetic, and the poetic art of the time, as well as a knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues. In its Greek teaching, indeed, the school was fortunate, for the knowledge of Greek was fast fading away from the western world, and where it still lingered, instruction in it had died down into the mastering of a list of words without knowledge of its grammar or its literature. But Greek was the native tongue of Theodore, and though Hadrian was by birth an African, he had lived long enough in Southern Italy, where Greek was still a living tongue, to be as skilled a master of it as of Latin.[1] How thorough their teaching in both languages was, is shown by the fact that sixty years afterwards Bæda found men who had been trained in the school of Canterbury, who knew Latin and Greek as perfectly as their own English tongue.[2]

Ealdhelm.

But the influence of this school on the development of English intellect is shown more vividly by the fact that from it our written literature, the literature that is of the English in Britain, took its birth. With one scholar, Æddi, who followed Wilfrid to York, began the prose literature of Northern Britain; with another, Ealdhelm, began at an even earlier date the whole literature of the

[1] "Græcæ pariter et Latinæ linguæ peritissimus."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 1.

[2] "Indicio est quod usque hodie supersunt de eorum discipulis, qui Latinam Græcamque linguam æque ut propriam in qua nati sunt norunt."—Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 2.

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South. Ealdhelm[1] was a kinsman of the royal house of Wessex, and probably a son of one of the West-Saxon kings. If, as seems likely, he was born in the middle of the seventh century, he must have already reached manhood when the school was set up at Canterbury; and his earlier training was due to Maidulf, an Irish wanderer who had sought a spot for his hermitage in the woodlands of Northern Wessex, and who was gathering scholars there from among its thegns. But it was from Hadrian and Theodore that Ealdhelm drew the intellectual impulse which he communicated to the scholars who gathered round him when he returned to his home at Malmesbury. He had become a master of all the knowledge of his day, and the rising scholar-world of Kent and Northumbria welcomed his Latin poems and prose, where a real quickness of wit and perception of natural beauty struggled with a fatal luxuriance of metaphor and rhetoric.[2] But to Wessex itself Ealdhelm was more than a mere scholar. He was the first singer of his race. Ælfred loved to tell how Ealdhelm won men to

[1] Ealdhelm's Life by Faricius is printed by Giles, "Opera Aldhelmi," p. 354; that by W. of Malmesbury forms the fifth book of his "Gesta Pontificum," in Rolls ed.; also Wharton, "Anglia Sacra," vol. ii.

[2] Malmesbury, "Life of Aldhelm" (Angl. Sacr., vol. ii. p. 7), says:—"Græci involute, Romani splendide, Angli pompatice dictare solent," and credits Ealdhelm with combining the merits of the three (Rolls ed. p. 344). "Involute" and "pompatice" fairly describe a writer who is utterly carried away by the new charms of style.

heed sacred things by taking stand as a gleeman and singing English songs on a bridge.[1] The songs of Ealdhelm led the way in that upgrowth of popular poetry which was soon to fill the land with English verse. Creed, prayer, riddle, allegory, acrostic, bible-story and saint-story, hero-tale and battle-tale, proverb and moral saw, the longing of the exile, the toil of the seaman, the warning of the grave, passed alike into rime. It was with an ever-growing stock of ballads that the gleeman trolled his way from fair to fair. A book of English songs was the prize of Ælfred's childhood; English songs were the first study of his children; "vain songs and legends of heathendom" were played by Dunstan in youth upon his harp. A mass of poetic romance grew up round the later English kings; and the story of Æthelstan and Eadgar has been all but lost in the ballad-growth which the chroniclers of the twelfth century melted down into prose.

Conquest of the Avon basin.

The district in which Ealdhelm taught and sang was one which had but lately passed into the hands of the West-Saxons. We have seen that in their early conquests of the Marlborough Downs they had been barred from further progress by a

[1] Malmesbury, "Life of Aldhelm," Rolls ed. p. 336 (Angl. Saer., vol. ii. p. 4), "Nativæ quoque linguæ non negligebat carmina." He quotes the gleeman story from Ælfred's Handbook, "manualem librum regis Ælfredi." "Commemorat Ælfredus carmen triviale, quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur, Aldhelmum fecisse;" so that Aldhelm's songs were still popular in the twelfth century.


SOUTH BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
British Names... Belgae, Roman... REGNUM, English... Badburh, Modern... Badbury
CORINIUM
Cirenceaster
Cirencester
Maidulfsburh
Malmesbury
Wanborough
Bryanburh
Barbury Hill
Marlborough
CUNETIO
VERLUCIO
Devizes
Ethandun
Hanging Stones
Stonehenge
Ambresburh
Amesbury
SORBIODUNUM
Saerobürh
Old Sarum
Salisbury
Wilton
Cerdigesford
Charford
Mount Badon
Badburh
Badbury
Dorsaetan
Poole
VECTIS, Wiht
I. of Wight
Wihtgaraburh
Carisbrook
The Solent
Spithead
Hampton
Southampton
CLAUSENTUM
Bittern
VENTA BELGARUM
Wintceaster
Winchester
Meon Stoke
PORTUS MAGNUS
Porchester
REGNUM
Cissanceaster
Chichester
Selsea Bill
ANDERIDA
Andredesceaster
Pevensey
Beachy Head
Andredsleah
Andredsweald
ANDERIDA SILVA
The Weald
South Saxons
East Saxons
LUNDINIUM
Lundenburh
London
Wibba's Dun
Wimbledon
Kingston
Staines
Windsor
Reading
Guildford
CALLEVA ATREBATUM
Silchester
Newburh
Newbury
Hungerford
Andover
Abingdon
Wallingford
Wantage
Faringdon
Dorchester
Chalgrove
Bensington
Henley
Goring
SULLONIACAE
Brockley Hill
Dartford
DURDOBRIVAE
Rochester
Otford
Aegelesford
Aylesford
Crecganford
Crayford
HERTFORD
Hainault Forest
Cent
Weybridge
Bagshot Heath
North Downs
South Downs

forest that then filled the upper basin of the Avon. This woodland was in itself a northern continuation of the great Selwood; it extended even in the time of Charles I. as far as Cricklade; at the time of our story it still covered the site of Malmesbury;[1] and the town of Devizes, on the brow of the hill looking down over the Avon basin, probably preserves in Latin form the rendering of some English name like "Mere" or the "Border-spot," from which this forest ran unbroken westward as far as the outskirts of Bath.[2] Though the victory of Deorham at last carried West-Saxon territory round the northern and western borders of this British tract, and left it running up like a wedge into English soil, it was still saved for a while from annexation by the fall of Ceawlin, the outbreak of anarchy among his people, and the fatal blows which fell upon the West-Saxons at the hands of Eadwine and Penda. But the loss of the territory of the Hwiccas, the loss of the Severn valley and the Cotswolds, forced them to fresh action in this quarter. Barred from any further advance to the north, they saw even their progress westward threatened by the presence of Mercia on the lower Avon; and it was as much to preserve their one remaining field of conquest as to compen-

[1] "Nemoris amoenitate quod tunc temporis in immensum eo loco succreverat captus, eremeticam exercuit" (Maidulfus). Malmesbury, "Life of Aldhelm" (Angl. Sacr. vol. ii. p. 3; Rolls ed., p. 334).

[2] Guest, "Welsh and English Boundaries," Origines Celticæ, vol. ii. p. 255.


British Names.....Dammonii
Roman Names.....AQUAE SULIS
English Names.....Bathanceaster
Modern Names.....Bath
MONMOUTH
CLAMORGAN
ISCA SILURUM
Caerlon
VENTA SILURUM
GLOUCESTER
Mouth of the Severn
Bristol
AQUAE SULIS
Bathanceaster
Bath
Mendip Hills
Watchet
Exmoor
Somers
Glastonbury
Taunton
CHALIS
Ilchester
Wellington
Sherborne
Dunotrigues
Domnaetan
Dernaetan
ISCA DAMNONIORUM
Exeter
DUNOVARIA
Dorchester
Deorham
Chippenham
Malmesbury
Marlborough
Braden Forest
Savernake Forest
VERLUCIO
Salisbury
Plain
Hanging Stones
Stonehenge
Ambresbury
Amesbury
SORBIODUNUM
Old Sarum
Salisbury
Cerdigesford
Charford
Mt. Badon
Badbury
Ringwood
Poole
Wareham
Swanage
VECTIS, Wiht
I. of Wight
CLINETIO
Andover
Hunger-ford
Solent
Cornwall
Devon
SOUTH WEST BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
Walker & Boutall sc.

sate for the retreat of their frontier in other quarters that Cenwealh marched on this northernmost fastness of Dyvnaint.

Ealdhelm's work.

In 652 a battle at Bradford on the Avon made the forest tract his own;[1] while a fresh fight with the Welsh, six years later, in 658, at a place called the Pens, cleared them from the ground along the upper Parrett.[2] It must have been soon after this conquest that Maidulf, an Irish scholar monk,[3] set up his hermitage in the forest-tract which had been torn from the Britons, and drew around him the first scholars of Wessex. Ealdhelm, as we have seen, was the most famous outcome of this school, but he no sooner succeeded Maidulf as abbot of the little township which was growing up round that teacher's school and church, and which still preserves his memory in its name of "Maidulf's burh" or Malmesbury, than he became a centre, not only of intellectual, but of religious and industrial activity in his neighbourhood. In the heart of the great woodland which stretched from Malmesbury to the Channel, he planted four new germs of social life in the monasteries which he established at Bradford on the Avon; at Frome on the little river which bears that name; at Sherborne on the borders of the forest country through which the Dorsætas must have been still at this

[1] Engl. Chron. a. 652. [2] Engl. Chron. a 658.

[3] "Eruditione philosophus, professione monachus."—Malm. "Life of Aldhelm" (Angl. Sacr. vol. ii. p. 3; Rolls ed., p. 334).

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time pushing their way; and at Wareham on the coast beside Poole—a point which shows that these invaders had already advanced at least thus far towards the west. The churches he raised at these spots are noteworthy as the first instances of building which we meet with in Wessex, but they had nothing of the rudeness of early work; architecturally, indeed, they were superior to the famous churches which Benedict Biscop was raising at this time by the banks of the Wear.[1] So masterly was their construction that Ealdhelm's churches at Malmesbury and Sherborne were the only churches of this early time that were spared by the Norman architects after the conquest; while the church which he erected on the scene of Cenwealh's victory at Bradford on Avon, stands in almost perfect preservation to-day.

The English dioceses.

While Ealdhelm was thus riming and building in Wessex, Theodore himself was steadily carrying out the second part of his plans for the organization of the Church. In the council of Hertford the question of the increase of the episcopate had been debated, but left without formal decision.[2] From what we find afterwards it is probable that this absence of any resolve on the part of the

[1] Freeman, "King Ine," Somersetshire Archæological Proceedings, 1874, vol. xx. p. 31.

[2] The ninth canon runs—"In commune tractatum est, ut plures Episcopi crescente numero fidelium augerentur, sed de hac re ad præsens siluimus."—Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. i. p. 120.

council was owing to the reluctance of most of the bishops concerned to consent to the division of their dioceses. But Theodore's purpose remained unshaken, and the council had no sooner closed than he began to carry out his plans. The shape which his present work took, like the shape of his earlier work, was determined by the previous history of the English people. The conquest of the Continent has been wrought either by races such as the Goths, who were already Christian, or by heathens such as the Franks, who bowed to the Christian faith of the nations they conquered. To this oneness of religion between the German invaders of the Empire and their Roman subjects was owing the preservation of all that survived of the Roman world. The Church everywhere remained untouched. The Christian bishop became the defender of the conquered Italian or Gaul against the Gothic and Lombard conqueror, the mediator between the German and his subjects, the one bulwark against barbaric violence and oppression. To the barbarian on the other hand he was the representative of all that was venerable in the past, the living record of law, of letters, and of art. But in Britain priesthood and people were exterminated together. When Theodore came to organize the Church of England, the very memory of the older Christian Church which existed in Roman Britain had passed away. The first missionaries to the Englishmen, strangers in

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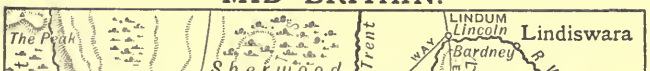
a heathen land, attached themselves necessarily to the courts of the kings, who were their earliest converts, and whose conversion was generally followed by that of their people. The English bishops were thus at first royal chaplains, and their diocese was naturally nothing but the kingdom. The kingdom of Kent became the diocese of Canterbury, and the kingdom of Northumbria became the diocese of York. So absolutely was this the case that the diocese grew or shrank with the growth or shrinking of the realm which it spiritually represented, and a bishop of Wessex or of Mercia found the limits of his see widened or cut short by the triumphs of Wulfhere or of Ine. In this way too realms which are all but forgotten are commemorated in the limits of existing sees. That of Rochester represented till of late an obscure kingdom of West Kent, and the frontier of the original kingdom of Mercia might be recovered by following the map of the ancient bishopric of Lichfield.

Division of the Mercian diocese.

To make episcopal rule and supervision a real and living thing over such wide spaces, it was needful that these realm-dioceses should be broken up into smaller sees; but it was characteristic of the care with which Theodore sought an historical foundation for his work that even in their division he only fell back on the tribal demarcations which lay within the limits of each kingdom. Thus when in 673 he broke up the see of East-Anglia it was

MID BRITAIN.



same scale as South Britain.

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by dividing it into dioceses of the North-folk and the South-folk, whose prelates were established at Dunwich and Elmham.[1] He dealt in the same way with the huger Mercian diocese by setting a bishop over the Middle English with a see at Leicester; by establishing at Worcester a bishopric for the Hwiccas of the lower Severn valley; and another for the far-off Hecanas at Hereford; while the peoples whom Wulfhere's sword had torn from the kingdom of the West-Saxons, and part of whom at least seem to have been known as the South-Engle, may have been committed to the charge of a bishop at Dorchester on the Thames.[2] The see of Lichfield thus returned to its original form of a see of the Mercians proper, though its bounds on the westward now embraced much of the upper Severn valley with Cheshire and the lands northward to the Mersey.

Monastic movement.

The division of Mercia seems to have been begun in the face of an opposition from Bishop Winfrid, who held this vast diocese, which was

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 5; Flor. Worc. a. 673.

[2] The details of this division are obscure (see Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 127-130). For Worcester we have Bæda's authority (H. E. iv. 23), as well as for Dorchester (ibid.), though this is disputed by Professor Stubbs ("Councils," iii. 130, note e). The sees of Mercia and the Middle Angles were still both in Sexulf's hands as late as 678, so that the separation of the latter must be later than that year (Bæda, H. E. iv. 12). On Putta's flight from Rochester, in 676, Sexulf gave him possession of a church at Hereford, and there he died (Bæda, H. E. iv. 12); but at what exact year the actual bishopric was established we are not told.

only put an end to by Theodore's removal of him from his see in 675;[1] and years more had to be spent in completing the whole arrangement; but throughout Theodore could count on the strenuous support of the king. It was possibly indeed the accession of Æthelred, who succeeded his brother Wulfhere in 675, that enabled Theodore to begin his work in Mercia in that year.[2] Æthelred was a king of a temper far other than that of his predecessor. Though the first days of his reign were disturbed by a strife with Kent, which was sinking more and more into dependence on the Mercian kings, and which seems to have endeavoured to resume its independence on Wulfhere's death, an effort that ended in fresh submission after the destruction of Rochester,[3] his temper was peaceful and religious; and his activity mainly showed itself in a planting and endowment of monastic colonies which gradually transformed the face of the realm. In the monastic movement of this time two strangely contrasted impulses worked together to change the very aspect of the new England and the new English society. The one was the passion for solitude, the first outcome of the religious impulse given by the conversion; a passion for communing apart with themselves and with God which drove men into waste and woodland and desolate fen. The other was the equally

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 6. [2] Eng. Chron. a. 675.
[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 12.

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new passion for social life on the part of the nation at large, the outcome of its settlement and well-doing on the conquered soil, and yet more of the influence of the new religion, coming as it did from the social civilization of the older world, and insensibly drawing men together by the very form of its worship and its belief. The first impulse showed itself most vividly in the Irish missionaries, in Aidan's choice of a lonely island for his settlement at Lindisfarne; in Cuthbert's choice of a yet lonelier sandbank for his later hermitage; in Ceadda's retirement in the quiet solitude of Lichfield; or in Maidulf's withdrawal to the woods of Malmesbury. But the close of the seventh century had no sooner brought with it its period of peace than the social impulse was quick to undo the work which these solitaries had done. Reverence for their holiness, with a desire to profit by their teaching, drew devotee and scholar alike around them, and the little community had no sooner vindicated the new dignity which Christianity had given to labour by winning field from the forest or meadow from the marsh than it became the centre of a yet wider attraction. The sanctity of such settlements served in these early days of the new religion to ensure for them peace and safety in the midst of whatever war or social trouble might be disturbing the country about them; and the longing for a life of quiet industry which we see telling from this moment upon the older English

longing for war[1] drew men in crowds to these so-called monasteries.[2] Its results.

No settlements indeed could be more unlike the monasteries of later days. A vow of obedience and a vow of celibacy sufficed to hold the monks themselves, who formed the nucleus of each, together; and the necessity of labour for their maintenance left their intercourse with the settlers and dependents about them as free as that of other men. So far indeed were these homes from being bound by the strict ties of the Benedictine rule that they were often gathered on the loose Irish model of the family or the clan round some noble and wealthy person who sought devotional retirement. The looseness of their discipline, combined with a peculiar usage which in some cases brought monks and nuns together under the rule of the same abbess, exposed these communities at a later time to grave scandals; and in many cases the establishment of such a monastery was only a pretext under which a lord and his dependents exempted themselves from their national obligations of military service.[3] But even in such a case, the new aversion from warfare, the new longing for peaceful industry, was shown in the so-

[1] Bæda, H. E. iv. 3. Vit. Abbat. (Hussey's "Bæda," p. 322).

[2] Thus there were six hundred at Wearmouth soon after its establishment. Bæda, Vit. Abbatum (Hussey's "Bæda," p. 328).

[3] Bæda, Letter to Ecgberht (Hussey's "Bæda," p. 338), and H. E. lib. v. c. 23.

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called monastery. Whatever were the causes, however, of this movement, it brought with it a transfer and readjustment of population which changed the whole face of the country. Here and there it revived the civilization of the past by bringing fresh life to the ruins of a Roman town. The solitude of its ruins drew to them a hermit, and the sanctity of the hermit drew after him a crowd of disciples and settlers that again brought busy life to its desolation. But it made a more startling revolution by reclaiming the wilder districts which civilization and social life had as yet never visited at all. It broke the dreary line of the northern coast with settlements which proved forerunners of some of our busiest ports. It broke the silence of waste and moor by houses like those of Ripon and Lastingham. It set agricultural colonies in the depths of vast woodlands, as at Evesham or Malmesbury, while by a chain of religious houses it made its way step by step into the heart of the fens.

Forest of Arden.

We can best realize the change which this movement made in Mercia by following it here and there across the face of the country. In the angle between the Cotswolds and the hills which form the eastern boundary of the Severn valley lay the largest of all the forests of Britain. The barren tract of low clays indeed which lay along the base of the Cotswolds was for the most part free from wood, but across the Avon, from the

site of our Rugby to that of our Evesham, ran a line of dense woodland which stretched away northward without a break to the bounds of Cannock Chase,[1] and extended eastward and westward from the valley of the Severn to the limits of our Leicestershire.[2] This was Arden, the forest into whose depths Shakspere could stray centuries later from his childhood's home at Stratford, and in whose glades his fancy placed the scene of one of his loveliest dramas.[3] But in Shakspere's day

[1] A line of hamlets which bear the name of "Woodend," stretching across Staffordshire, just south of Walsall and Wolverhampton, marks roughly the northern border of Arden. Camden marks one by Shenstone, just south of Lichfield, another close to Walsall, and a third at Sedgely, south of Wolverhampton. But beyond these the ground was still richly studded in Camden's day with outliers of the "Wooland," Walsall Wood, Essington Wood, Kingswood, and the like, which show its extension at an earlier time. See map of Staffordshire in Camden's "Britannia" (ed. 1753), vol. i. p. 633.

[2] As late as Elizabeth's time (and Shakspere's time) our Warwickshire was parted into the "Feldon" and the "Wooland" or Wood-land; the first a tract of open pastures between the Avon and the Cotswolds; the second, to the north of the Avon, though not without "pastures and cornfields," yet in the main "clothed with woods" (Camden, "Britannia," ed. 1753, vol. i. 598, 606). The clearing of the "wooland" was in fact only due to the subsequent growth of its ironworks, which "destroyed such prodigious quantities of wood that they laid the country more open, and by degrees made room for the plough," so that "whereas within the memory of man they were supplied with corn from the Feldon," writes Gibson in 1753, they now grew more corn than they needed. By a curious correlative change, as the soil thus cleared proved far more fertile than the clay lands of the Feldon, the latter, whose "fertile fields of corn and verdant pastures" had delighted Camden's eye in 1606, had by Gibson's day become almost wholly pasture land.

[3] "As You Like It," act i. sc. i. "(Oliver). Where will the

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its mass was broken everywhere by the clearings of the Warwickshire men; towns were planted in the very heart of its woodlands, and the miner had thinned its clumps with his forges. No such settlement or traces of man broke its solitude when the West-Saxons gazed on the skirts of this huge forest after their victory at Deorham. Even the great roads of the island refrained from piercing it, though three of the main lines of communication through Britain ran along its edges. The Fosse Road traversed the open clays between the Avon and the Cotswolds. The Watling Street struck along its north-eastern border from our Rugby to Tamworth. Even the Ryknield Way, which was probably a mere trackway of the earliest times, crept along the western border of the forest beneath the slopes of the Lickey Hills, and only struck across it in its northern and narrower portion past the site of the later Birmingham to the plain of the Tame.

Evesham.

In the broken and volcanic country along the northern border of Arden, there was nothing as yet to show the existence of those mineral treasures which nowadays make this district lurid night and day with the glare of iron-foundries, and hideous with their cinder-heaps. All was still wild forest-

old duke live? (Charles). They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world."

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land where the little settlement of Wolverhampton told of the wolves who carried off the farmers' sheep and kine into the thickets, while further in its depths, unconscious of its after greatness, lay the little 'ham' of the Beormingas, our Birmingham. It was only on its south-eastern border, in fact, that life and industry as yet touched this woodland. Here, between the forest edge and the slopes of the Cotswolds, the Avon made its way to the Severn valley, and along the vale of the Avon were scattered a few early settlements. Coventry indeed was not to rise for centuries on its waters; but Kenilworth and Leamington were, no doubt, even now quiet townships in this district; the tribe of the Wearingas must have already set up that 'wick' of their own which was to give its name of Wearingawick or Warwick to the whole tract when it became shire-land; Stratford marked the place where the Roman road passed the river by its paved ford on its way to the west; and a little onward a 'vill' of the Hwiccan or Mercian kings was rising beside the ruined walls and towers which were all that remained of the Roman Alcester. Heathendom must still have lingered in the mighty woodland when Bishop Ecgwine of Worcester carried the Gospel into its depths; and we may perhaps see Woden-worshipping miners at Alcester in the dæmons of his legend, who drowned the preacher's voice with the din of their hammers. But in spite of their hammers Ecgwine's preaching

left a lasting trace behind it. The Bishop heard how a swineherd, coming out of the dark forest into a sunny glade, saw forms which were possibly those of the Three Fair Women of the old German mythology, seated round a mystic bush, and singing their unearthly song. In Ecgwine's fancy these women transformed themselves into a vision of the Mother of Christ; and the silent glade soon became the site of an abbey dedicated to her, and of a town which sprang up under its shelter—the Evesham which was to be hallowed in after time by the fall of Earl Simon of Leicester.[1]

The Fen.

Wilder even than the western woodland was the desolate fen-country on the eastern border of the kingdom which stretched from the 'Holland,' the sunk, hollow land of Lincolnshire, to the channel of the Ouse, a wilderness of shallow waters and reedy islets, wrapt in its own dark mist-veil and tenanted only by flocks of screaming wild-fowl. Here through the liberality of King Wulfhere rose on the western border of the great morass the abbey of Medeshamstead, a community which grew in after time into our Peterborough. On its northern edge an obscure hermit, Botulf, founded a little house which as ages went by became our

[1] The abbey was founded in 709 (Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 278 *et seq.*). A life of Ecgwine may be found in Macray's "Chronicle of Evesham;" but the rendering of the figures in his vision as the 'Three Women' is a doubtful suggestion of Mr. Wright. For the chronological difficulties of the story, see Stubbs, Dict. Christ. Biog., art. "Ecgwine," vol. ii. p. 62.


EAST BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
British Names ..... Iceni
Roman Names ..... LINDUM
English Names ..... Bedicanford
Modern Names ..... Lincoln
Beverley
Market Weighton
Holderness
Deira
Ravenspur?
R. Trent
R. Ancholme
R. Humber
Lincoln Wolds
Lindsey
Lindiswara
LINDUM, Lincoln
Bardney
R. Witham
Fosse Way
Ermine Street
Kesteven
LINCOLN
The Wash
Boston
GRANODUNUM Grancaster
CAUSENNAE Ancaster
North Gyrwas
The Gyrwas
Stamford
Crowland
DUROBRIVAE Castor (Potteries)
Wansford
Water Newton
Medeshampstead Peterborough
Ouse R.
Fens
HUNTINGDON
Huntingdon
DUROLIPONS Cantabrigchester
Ely
Lit. Ouse R.
North Folk
R. Wensum
Elmham
Norwich
R. Yare
GARIANNONUM Burgh Cas.
VENTA ICENORUM Caistor St. Edmunds
East Angles
Thetford
R. Wateney
Bury St. Edmunds
Newmarket
SITOMAGUS Dunwich
South Folk
R. Orwell
Sudbury
Stour
R. Stour
R. Colne
C. 449
CAMULODUNUM Colchester
R. Chelmer
OTHONAE Ithanceaster
R. Thames
St. Neots
R. Ouse
CAMBORITUM Cambridge
South Gyrwas
Bedicanford Bedford
BEDFORD
Icknield Way
Devil's Dyke
Saffron Walden
Royston
Dunstable
Watling Street
Chiltern Hills
Hertford
Epping Forest
Hainault Forest
VERULAMIUM St. Albans
SULLONIACAE Brockley Hill
LONDINIUM Lundenburh London
MIDDLE SEA
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Botulf's town or Boston.[1] Further in the fen itself the queen of Ecgfrith, Æthelthryth or Æthelreda, found a refuge from her husband in the low rise amidst its waters which is crowned nowadays with the noble minster of Ely.[2] It was in the very heart of the fen that Guthlac, a youth of the royal race of Mercia, sought a refuge from the world in the solitude of Crowland.[3] The early life of Guthlac[4] marks the wild barbarism of the times. He spent it after the fashion of young warriors, in private feuds, in sacking and burning town and homestead, and carrying off booty from his foes. Suddenly, as he lay sleepless in the forest among his sleeping war-band, there rose before him the thought of his crimes and of the doom that waited on him. Such thoughts were stirred in many hearts no doubt by the new Christian faith ; but in none did they find a quicker answer. The birds waking with the dawn only roused his comrades to hear Guthlac's farewell. At the abbey of Repton, the burying-place as yet of the royal line of Mercia, he shore off the long hair which marked the noble ; and then, moved by the life of hermit saints which he read there, betook himself to the heart of the fen.

[1] Botulf was visited about 670 by Ceolfrid, afterwards Abbot of Wearmouth. Anon. Hist. Abbatum, Bæda, "Opera Minora" (ed. Stevenson), p. 319.

[2] For Ely and its name, see Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 19, where he gives the story of Æthelreda.

[3] For Crowland, even in the sixteenth century, see Camden's "Britannia" (ed. 1753), vol. i. p. 551.

[4] The name of Guthlac was that of his house, the Guthlacings.

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Its birds became his friends; they perched unhindered on shoulder and knee, and rested in the thatch that covered the little cell he had hollowed out in what seems to have been a plundered burial-ground. "He who in cleanness of heart is one with God, all things are one with him," commented the recluse; "he who denies himself the converse of men wins the converse of birds and beasts and the company of angels." But it was harder than Guthlac fancied to escape the converse of men. His solitude was broken by crowds of devotees, by abbot and monk, by thegn and ceorl, as they flocked over the fen to the solitary's cell; and so great was the reverence which he won that two years after his death the stately abbey of Crowland was raised over his tomb. Earth was brought in boats to form a site; the buildings rested on oaken piles driven into the marsh, a stone church replaced the hermit's cell, and the toil of the new brotherhood changed the pools around them into fertile meadow land.[1]

The Thames Valley.

If we turn from the Fens to the Thames valley we see the new religion gathering new centres of social life along the line of the great river. A wild legend, the legend of S. Frideswide, first gives us a glimpse in the midst of the eighth century of the future Oxford, as yet no doubt but a few fishermen's huts creeping up along the line of the later "Fish Street" from the ford across the Thames to

[1] Guthlac's life is printed in Acta Sanct. Boll. at April xi.

the little monastery that had risen over the saint's remains;[1] and a little further along the river, in some meadows beside its southern bank, there had already risen in the later days of Ealdhelm a religious house which was to acquire a far different celebrity from that of Frideswide, the abbey under whose walls grew up the town of Abingdon.[2] As Abingdon rose into light, the brief greatness of a spot lower down the river was passing away. The present village of Dorchester probably occupies the site of a Roman borough; and the dyke that guarded the town, as well as a huge hill-fort of the Britons in its neighbourhood, shows that the spot had been of importance in very early times. Here Birinus fixed the bishop's stool of the West Saxons, and here in the presence of Oswald the West-Saxon king submitted to baptism. But the removal of the West-Saxon bishopric to Winchester gave a fatal blow to the place; and even a later

[1] Frideswide is not mentioned by Bæda, but an Anglo-Saxon catalogue of saints states her to have been buried at Oxford, and Domesday shows her canons to have been long established there. Her story first appears in Malmesbury, and is probably a genuine tradition. The expanded life of Prior Philip may be found in the Bollandist "Acta Sanctorum," Oct. viii. p. 560; and see article in "Dictionary of Christian Biography," vol. ii. p. 563.

[2] The early history of Abingdon is obscure. Hean, a nephew of Cissa, an under-king of our Berkshire in the days of Centwine, seems to have founded the original monastery on folk-land at Abba's dun, "where Chilswell farm now stands," says Professor Bright, "Early English Church History" p. 262. Ine, however, took back the land, and when the house was refounded twenty years later it was set up on its present site, then called Sheovesham.

CHAP. VII. transfer to it of the Mercian bishopric failed to
The Church and the Kingdoms. raise it into importance. Yet further along the Thames valley the great foundation of Henry I.
659-690. had not begun the transformation of the settlement of the Readings into our thriving Reading; nor was Windsor to be crowned for centuries yet by the group of royal and ecclesiastical buildings which preserve the glories of the Plantagenets. But the bishops of the East Saxons were already establishing their home at Fulham; in the little house amid the marshes of the Tyburn which claimed King Sæberht as its founder lay a germ of the coming Westminster; and if no great abbey within its walls, besides its own church of St. Paul, marked the devotion of London, that of its bishop Ercenwald was shown by his two foundations; one for himself at Chertsey, the first trace of life we have as yet encountered in the new Surrey; the other for his sister Æthelburh at Barking. The legends of Barking, as Bæda has preserved them, are full of the poetry of monastic life, of those visions of angelic glory, those sounds of angelic music, that gave beauty to its very trivialities. Light above all was the plaything of this religious fancy. It was the resting of an unearthly brightness on the spot that guided the nuns of Barking in the choice of their burial-ground; the light, they said, that was to receive the souls of its handmaidens had shown the place where their bodies should rest till the rising again. "Let

your candle burn as it may," murmured a sister of the same house to those who watched her dying through the night, "it is no light of mine; my light will come to me at the dawn of day!" The body of their dead abbess as the nuns in vision saw it floating heavenward glowed with a celestial splendour beyond the sun.[1]

Mid-Britain.

In a survey of the rest of the Mercian kingdom we meet with little more than names, but even names have a living interest when they reveal to us for the first time the existence of communities which have lived on for a thousand years since, and form actual elements in the England of to-day. As we pass from the valley of the Thames to the valley of the Severn we find that a new English borough, the borough of Cirencester, has already sprung to life on the wreck of the Roman Corinium.[2] The foundation of a monastery by an under-king of the Hwiccas within its walls reveals to us the springing up of a like new life in another of the cities which had been wrecked by Ceawlin's inroad, the city of Bath.[3] Gloucester, though we do not hear of it as yet, may have been growing into being on the site of the third city which defied the West-Saxon king, that of Glevum; but the new masters of the lower Severn valley seem to have found their centre higher up the river, on

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 7, 8.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 628.

[3] A monastery at Bath was founded by this under-king Osric in 676.

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the very border of the forest of Wyre, in a town whose existence the establishment of one of Theodore's bishopries discloses to us, the town of Wyre-ceaster or Worcester.[1] If we pass from the Severn to Mid-Britain itself, we find as yet no mention of Northampton on the upland that now bears its name, nor any trace of the return of life to the ruins of Towcester; but Medeshamstede, as we have seen, was already rising where the upland sloped to the fen, and the little monastery of Oundle shows that life was pushing still higher up the valley of the Nen. Along the Trent itself we find few traces of the new social impulse, though Repton had been called to life on its upper waters by the withdrawal of Abbess Ælfrida to a religious life; and further along the river a like house had gathered at Burton. But the Mercian kings were already established at Tamworth; the Pecsætan had no doubt found a centre in the North-weorthig which has become our Derby, and the Middle-Engle in our Leicester; while on the great rise to the south of the Humber we see not only communities established at Sidnacester and Bardney, but a new borough of the Lindiswaras, with a stone church founded by Paulinus as its spiritual centre, growing up amongst the ruins of the Roman Lindum.[2]

[1] Worcester was from the first the seat of the Hwiccian bishopric.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 16. "Lindocolinæ civitatis."

Such was the Mercia whose ecclesiastical organization Theodore was still engaged in completing, when in 678 he was invited by King Ecgfrith to undertake a like organization of Northumbria.[1] Isolated as it had now become from the rest of Britain, Northumbria was far from having sunk from its old renown either in government or war. It still remained, indeed, first among the English states. Ecgfrith had succeeded his father Oswiu in 670,[2] and though he made no effort to reverse his father's policy as regards Southern Britain, or to attempt to build up again a supremacy over its states, he showed himself resolute to enlarge the bounds of his kingdom by conquests over the Welsh. The Welsh states across the western moors had owned, at least from Oswald's time, the Northumbrian supremacy, but little actual advance had been made by the English in this quarter since the victory of Chester, and northward of the Ribble the land between the moors and the sea still formed a part of the British kingdom of Cumbria. It was from this tract, from what we now know as northern Lancashire and the Lake district, that Ecgfrith's armies chased the Britons in the early years of his reign.[3] The

Ecgfrith of Northumbria.

[1] Eddi, "Life of Wilfrid," c. xxiv. "Theodorum cum muneribus . . . invitaverunt."

[2] Bæda, H. E. iv. 5.

[3] This conquest, like the after conquest of the Picts, lies between his accession in 670 and his strife with Wulfhere of Mercia in 675. See Eddi, "Life of Wilfrid," c. xx.

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British clergy still fled before the conqueror's sword, and from the sacred spots which they deserted large grants were made by Ecgfrith to the see of York in the country between the Ribble and the Mersey, in Amounderness, and in Cartmell, or the vale of the Duddon,[1] the three districts which together make up our present Lancashire;[2] but there was no break in the general policy of the later English conquests, and the rest of the British population remained as tributaries on the soil.[3]

[1] Wilfrid claimed for his see, "ea loca sancta in diversis regionibus, quæ clerus Brytannus, aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostræ fugiens, deseruit. Erat quippe Deo placabile donum, quod religiosi reges tam multas terras Deo ad serviendum pontifici nostro conscripserunt; et haec sunt nomina regionum juxta Rippel, et in Gaedyne, et in regione Dunutinga, et in Caetlaevum, in cæterisque locis."—Eddi, "Life of Wilfrid," c. xvii. Mr. Raine in a note on this passage of Eddi says: "Peter of Blois in his missing life of Wilfrid describes these districts thus: 'Scilicet Ribble et Hasmundesham et Marchesiæ' (Leland, Coll. ed. 1774, iii. p. 110). By these he seems to mean Amounderness in north Lancashire, and the 'terra inter Ripham et Mersham' (Domes. Book), the country between the Ribble and the Mersey." He points out too that if Gaedyne be identified with Gilling near Richmond, and Dunutinga, or as Peter of Blois calls it, Duninga, with the country watered by the river Duddon, as well as Caetlaevum with Cartmell, we should have in these districts the whole of the western part of the archdeaconry of Richmond, and thus account for their ecclesiastical connection through it with the see of York.

[2] Cartmell is that district of Lancashire which, isolated from the rest of the county, lies north of Ulverston Bay; while Amounderness may at this time have included the whole tract between the Lune and the Ribble. See Camden's "Britannia" (1753), vol. ii. p. 975, where Amounderness is made to include the Fylde.

[3] Sim. Durh., Historia de S. Cuthberto; Twysden, Dec. Script. p. 69. King Ecgfrith gave "Cartmell et omnes Britannos cum eo" to St. Cuthbert.


BRITAIN NORTH OF THE WASH.
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50
British Names.....Brigantes, Bryneich
Roman Names.....EBORACUM
English Names.....Eoforwick
Modern Names.....York
Firth of Forth
Tyningham
St. Abbs Hd.
Coldingham
Edinburgh
Lammermoor
Selkirk or Ettrick Forest
Melrose
Lindisfarne
Holy I.
Bebbanburh
Bamborough
R. Coquet
R. Wansbeck
Hevenfeld
St. Oswalds
SEGEDUNUM Wallsend
Jarrow
Hexham
LUGUVALLIUM
Carlisle
Ebchester
Wearmouth
Maryport
Hartlepool
R. Tees
Cliffland
Cleveland
Strenaeskhalc
Whitby
Richmond
CATARACTONIUM
Catterick
York Moors
Lastingham
Vale of Pickering
Flamborough Head
Ripon
ISURIUM
Aldborough
DERVENTIO
Malton
EBORACUM
Eoforwick
York
Goodmanham
Beverley
Market Weighton
Holderness
Ravenspur?
CALCARIA
Raelcaceaster
Tadcaster
Ribchester
Ilkley
Settle
LEGIOLUM
Castleford
Hatfield
Stainford
DANUM
Doncaster
MANCUNIUM
Manchester
The Peak
Bawtrey
Gainsborough
LINDUM
Lincoln
Torksey
DEVA
Chester
Fethanleah
Faddiley
Maserfeld
Old Oswestry
Baschurch
URICONIUM
Wroxeter
Pengwyrn
Shrewsbury
Needwood Forest
Northweorthic
Derby
Repton
Southwell
AD PONTEM
Farndon
Snottinga
Nottingham
CAUSENNAE
Ancaster
Boston
RATAE. Legeceaster
Leicester
Stamford
Walker & Boutall sc.

CHAP. VII.

The Church and the Kingdoms.

659-690.

Triumphs over Picts and Mercians.

By the conquest of this western district Northumbria now stretched uninterruptedly from sea to sea, from the southern border of Elmet as far north as the city of Carlisle. Carlisle is of interest as the first instance which we have met with of a city in which there seems to have been no break of municipal life as it passed into English hands. Only a few years after its conquest by Ecgfrith we find a monastery founded there;[1] while the city itself and its district became part of the possessions of the see of Lindisfarne,[2] and it is as he stands by its Roman fountain that Cuthbert hears the news of Nectansmere. But the conquest of this district was quickly followed by fresh gains in the north, where Ecgfrith attacked with the same success both the Scots beyond Clydesdale and the Picts over the Firth of Forth.[3] The war indeed in this quarter was forced on him by the Picts, who rose against the yoke of tribute to which they had submitted under Oswiu, and marched with an army which seems to have been gathered from their whole territory in the Highlands on the English border. Ecgfrith met the attack with a comparatively small force, but his

[1] Bæda, "Life of Cuthbert," c. xxvii. It seems probable that after Ecgfrith's death his queen entered this monastery. Ibid. c. xxviii.

[2] Sim. Durh. Hist. Dun. Ecc. i. c. 9. "Lugubaliam quæ Luel vocatur in circuitu quindecim milliaria habentem in augmentum suscepit" (Cuthbertus).

[3] Eddi, c. xxi. "Triumphos ad Aquilonem super Brittones et Scottos."

victory was so complete that as the Northumbrian Chronicler tells us, two rivers were filled with the corpses of the slain, and the Picts were reduced to so complete a subjection that their territory on the northern bank of the Forth was reckoned from this time as Northumbrian ground.[1] How far Ecgfrith would have pushed his conquests in this quarter had his hands been left free we cannot tell, but the war with the Picts was hardly over when he was forced to meet a more formidable attack on his southern frontier. Wulfhere, as we have seen, had carried the supremacy of Mercia not only over the whole of Mid-Britain, but even as far as the British Channel; and it was as the practical master of all Britain south of the Humber, and with a force drawn from every one of its peoples, that he marched on Northumbria with a demand of subjection and tribute.[2] Ecgfrith however was as successful against the Mercians as against the Picts, and though as before his army was inferior in number to that of his opponents, after a bloody encounter he drove Wulfhere from the field, and forced the Mercian king in turn not only to surrender the land of the Lindiswaras, which he had taken from Oswiu in

[1] Eddi. c. xix.

[2] Eddi, c. xx. "Ulfharius rex Merciorum . . omnes australes populos adversum regnum nostrum concitans, non tam ad bellandum quam ad rediigendum sub tributo, servili animo, non regente Deo, proponebat."

CHAP. VII. The Church and the Kingdoms. 659-690. Its monastic colonies.

that king's later days,[1] but to pay tribute to Northumbria.[2]

The death of Wulfhere, which immediately followed this triumph, in 675, and the accession of the more peaceful Æthelred, removed for the time all pressure from the south, and left Northumbria free to carry on a work of industrial development, which was producing results even more striking than those which we have already watched in Mid-Britain. Here as there the movement was in name a monastic one, but the establishment of the monastic colonies which carried life and culture over the land was furthered in the north more than elsewhere by the enormous sweeps of waste which still made up the bulk of Northumbria. Nowhere was this waste so continuous as along the eastern coast. Save at the passage of the Tyne, where the Ælian bridge must now have been dropping into decay, hardly a single settlement had been made along this coast under the Roman rule; and though the Engle conquerors had planted their hams and tuns along its river-valleys, such as those of the Tweed or the Tyne, and had set a few fishing-villages along the shore, the bulk of the country was still untilled and unclaimed of man, and thus passed into the folk-land which lay at the disposal of the

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 3.

[2] "Occisis innumeris regem fugavit, regnumque ejus sub tributo distribuit."—Eddi, c. xx. Bæda, H. E. iv. 12.

Northumbrian kings. Though Edinburgh had been an English fortress since the days of Eadwine, and we already catch sight of Dunbar looking out over its stormy seas,[1] the whole space between them, north of the Lammermoor, was still folk-land in Oswald's day, when it was granted to the monastery at Lindisfarne.[2] It was from the waste country south of the Lammermoor that lands almost as wide were bestowed by Oswiu on a monastery which Ebba was establishing on the coast at Coldingham, as well as on the house of Melrose. The whole of the pastoral country on the banks of the Bowmont between the forest of Jedburgh and the Cheviots seems to have been first reclaimed when it was granted by Oswiu to Cuthbert during his abode at Melrose.[3] South of the Tweed as far as Bamborough, and reaching inland as far as the valley of the Till, lay as desolate a region, which formed part of the domain that Oswald carved out of his folk-land for the neighbouring holy island of Lindisfarne.[4] Lesser tracts were carved out of the district which we now call Durham, and which remained for centuries a wild and almost uninhabited moorland, for the little houses along its shore at

[1] Eddi, c. xxxviii., where King Ecgfrith sends Wilfrid a prisoner in "urbem suam Dynbaer."

[2] Hist. de S. Cuthberto ; Twysden, Dec. Script., col. 68.

[3] Hodgson Hinde on "Lothian." Archæol. Journ. vol. xiv. p. 311.

[4] Hist. de S. Cuthb. ; Twysden, Dec. Script., col. 69.

Ebb-chester and Hartlepool; while the grants of Ecgfrith and Oswiu to Wearmouth and to Whitby show that the coast district preserved the same character away to the south; in fact, when describing the site which King Oidilwald gave for the monastery of Lastingham in the moorlands which are now known as the forest of Pickering, Bæda calls it a place "which looked more like a lurking-place for robbers and a retreat for wild beasts than a habitation for man."[1]

Their secular character.

Of these colonies the northernmost, save a little house at Tyningham beside Dunbar, was the monastery which Ebba founded at Coldingham, to the south of the great promontory which still preserves her memory in its name of St. Abb's Head. Ebba was of the royal line, a daughter of Æthelfrith and a sister of Oswald and Oswiu;[2] and the character which her double house of monks and nuns took even during her life-time shows how much stronger a part was played in these settlements by the social than by the religious impulse. "I have looked into every one's chamber and beds," a heavenly visitant is said to have declared to an Irish ascetic, who reported it to the abbess, "and found none but you busy about the care of the soul; since all of these folk, both men and women, either indulge themselves in sloth and sleep, or wake to commit

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 23.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 19; Life of Cuthbert, c. x.

sin. For even the cells that were built for praying or reading are now converted into places of feasting, drinking, and talking, while the virgins dedicated to God, whensoever they are at leisure, apply themselves to weaving fine garments."[1] A fire which swept away the abbey of Coldingham was held to have been a judgment of heaven on the worldliness of its inmates,[2] but the tendency to create such settlements only grew stronger as the days went on. Under Ecgfrith's successors the practice became almost universal among the higher nobles and thegns of the court of procuring grants of folk-land under the pretext of establishing a religious house, of drawing to them monks from other monasteries, as well as inducing some of their own servants to take the tonsure and promise monastic obedience to their rule, while themselves often remaining laymen and profiting by their name of abbots to escape from all obligation of military service to the realm.[3]

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 25.

[2] For the gross moral abuses which sometimes grew out of this loose system of monasticism see letters of Boniface to Æthelbald, Herefrith, and Ecgberht; Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. 351, 357, 358.

[3] In 749 Æthelbald of Mercia freed all monasteries and churches throughout his realm from taxation and service save for the building of bridges and the defence of strongholds (see the charter in Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 386); and the same exemption was given in the other kingdoms. Bæda gives a detailed picture of the abuses which resulted in his letter to Ecgberht: "At alii graviore adhuc flagitio, quum sint ipsi laici et nullius vitæ regularis vel usu exercitati, vel amore præditi, data regibus pecunia, emunt sibi sub prætextu monasteriorum construendorum territoria in

CHAP. VII. The Church and the Kingdoms. 659-690.

However hotly statesmen or divines might protest from their different points of view against a practice which degraded religion while it weakened the military and political organization of the realm,[1] it is impossible not to see in such settlements as these an effort of Englishmen to free themselves from the trammels of their older existence and to find a more social and industrial life.

Labour indeed first rose into honour through

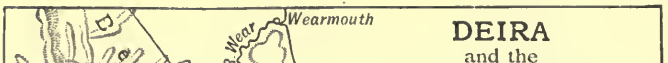
quibus suæ liberius vacent libidini, et hæc insuper in jus sibi hæreditarium edictis regalibus faciunt ascribi, ipsas quoque litteras privilegiorum suorum quasi veraciter Deo dignas, pontificum, abbatum, et potestatum seculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari. Sicque usurpatis sibi agellulis sive vicis, liberi exinde a divino simul et humano servitio, suis tantum inibi desideriis laici monachis imperantes deserviunt: imo non monachos ibi congregant, sed quoscunque ob culpam inobedientiæ veris expulsos monasteriis alicubi forte oberrantes invenerint, aut evocare monasteriis ipsi valuerint; vel certe quos ipsi de suis satellitibus ad suscipiendam tonsuram promissa sibi obedientia monachica invitare quiverint . . . . Sic per annos circiter triginta, hoc est, ex quo Aldfrid rex humanis rebus ablatus est, provincia nostra vesano illo errore dementata est, ut nullus pene exinde præfectorum extiterit qui non hujusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suæ præfecturæ comparaverit, suamque simul conjugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit; ac prævalente pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere sategerint."—Hussey's "Bæda," pp. 339, 340. (See also H. E. lib. v. c. 23.)

[1] We see the kings resisting the excessive creation of such houses, doubtless on this ground, from the beginning of the eighth century. Boniface, in a letter written between 744 and 747, remonstrated with Æthelbald of Mercia, "quod multa privilegia ecclesiarum et monasteriorum fregisses;" and adds, "privilegia ecclesiarum in regno Anglorum intemerata et inviolata permanserunt usque ad tempora Ceolredi Regis Mercionum et Osredi Regis Derorum et Berniciorum." (Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 354, 355.) Ceolred was king of Mercia, 709-715; Osred of Northumbria, 705-716.

this early monasticism. The story of Eosterwini is typical of the change which this movement brought about in men's conceptions of the dignity of toil. Eosterwini was a thegn of king Ecgfrith's, who at the age of twenty-four "laid down his arms," and entering the monastery of Wearmouth threw himself cheerfully into the toil that he found going on about him. "It was a pleasure to him to be employed along with the rest of the brethren in winnowing and grinding corn, in milking the ewes and cows, in working in the bakehouse, the garden, and the kitchen, and in every other occupation in the monastery. . . . When he went out anywhere for the furtherance of the business of the monastery, wherever he found the brethren at work it was his wont to join them forthwith in their labour, whether by guiding the plough-handle, or working iron with the forge-hammer, or wielding the winnowing-fan."[1] We see the same new drift of feeling yet more picturesquely in the figure of Owini, a head thegn of the household of Ecgfrith's queen, as he stands at the gate of the monastery of Lastingham, "clad only in a plain garment, and carrying an axe and mattock in his hand, thereby intimating that he did not go to the monastery to live idle as some do, but to labour." Once admitted as a brother, Owini carried out his purpose; "for as he was less capable of meditating on the Holy

Their influence on labour.

[1] Vit. Abbatum; Hussey's "Bæda," p. 322.


DEIRA
and the
TRENT VALLEY
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40
Wearmouth
R. Wear
Hartlepool
R. Tees
Cleveland
Strenaeskhalc
Whitby
Richmond
CATARACTONIUM
Catterick
Yorkshire Moors
Lastingham
Vale of Pickering
Flamborough Head
Forest of Galtres
DERVENTIO
Malton
ISURIUM
Aldborough
Ripon
Knaresborough
EBORACUM
York
Goodmanham
Market Weighton
Beverley
Holderness
R. Humber
CALCARIA
Tadcaster
Barwick in Elmet
LEGIOLUM
Castleford
Leeds
Wakefield
Stainford
Nostell Priory
Barnsdale
Heath
Hatfield
DANUM
Doncaster
CAMBODUNUM
MANCUNIUM
Manchester
Wharncliffe
Bawtrey
Gainsborough
Lincoln Wolds
Lindiswara
Lindsey
The Peak
CHESHIRE
Worksop
Sidnacester
LINDUM, Lincoln
Bardney
Sherwood Forest
Mole Cop
Newark
Boston
AD PONTEM
Farndon
GAUSENNAE
Ancaster
Needwood Forest
Northweorthic
Derby
Snottinga
Nottingham
Kesteven
Stafford
Repton
Charnwood Forest
The Wrekin
Lichfield
Tamworth
Cannock Chase
To Uriconium & Chester
WATLING STREET
RATAE
Leicester
DUROBRIVAE
Castor
Stamford
Crowland
Medeshamp-stead
Peterborough
Wolverhampton
Forest of Arden
Birmingham
Rockingham Forest
Walker & Boutall sc.

Scriptures, so he the more earnestly applied himself to the labour of his hands . . . and whilst the brethren were engaged within in reading he was busy without at work."[1] The mere sight of nobles such as these laying down the noble's arms, and voluntarily sharing with ceorl and serf about them the labour of their hands, must have raised labour itself into a new esteem among their fellow-men, and aided in that development of industry which was changing the whole face of the country.

Their influence on poetry.

But the movement did more than exalt labour. To its social side we are indebted for the birth of our literature. While Ealdhelm was singing his songs on the bridge at Malmesbury, a singer of far other sort was building up a great English poem on the Northumbrian coast.[2] The most notable and wealthy of the religious houses of Northumbria was that of Streoneshealh, an abbey which Oswiu reared for Hild and the child he had vowed to God as a thankoffering for his victory at the Winwæd.[3] The love of solitude and retirement which the northern Church drew from its Celtic founders told in the choice of the spot. Much of its loneliness indeed has now passed away: for sunset, as it strikes along the gorge of the Esk in

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. iii.

[2] We do not know the exact date of Cædmon's poem, but as it was read to Hild, who died in 680, it must have been composed some time in Ecgfrith's reign.

[3] In 657 (Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 24).

a glory of colour, lights up as with fire the ranks of red-tiled houses in which the busy seaport of Whitby clings to the slopes on either side the river-mouth. But on the cliff above it the weather-beaten ruins of an exquisite abbey church, which rose at a later time on the site of Hild's monastery, still stand out dark and lonely against the sky, and as we look from them over land and sea, the solitude which she chose for her home comes back to us. Whitby lies hidden in its river-valley; the bleak moors around are thinly threaded by half-buried lines of woodland, for the very trees take shelter in deep gorges which carry the moor waters to the sea. The fringe of culture that now creeps along the moorland's edge, the cottages dotted over the distance, the fishing hamlets huddled at the mouth of streamlets whose hollows break the crumbling line of marly cliffs, the herring-boats scattered over the colourless sea, the smoke trail of vessels on the grey horizon, hardly lessen the impression of loneliness. As we look over the wide stretch of country whose billowy swells and undulations lift themselves dark at eventide from the mist-veil that lies white around them, we see again the waste in which Hild reared her home, its grey reaches of desolate water, skimmed but by the white wings of gull or albatross, its dark tracts of desolate moor silent save for the wolf's howl or the eagle's scream.

Cædmon.

The stern grandeur of the spot blends fitly with

the thought of the poet who broke its stillness with the first great song that English singer had wrought since our fathers came to Britain. For the memory that endears Whitby to us is not that of Hild or of the scholars and priests who gathered round her. Her abbey indeed became from the first the greatest foundation of the north, for Hild was the daughter of Hereric and the great-grandchild of Ælla, and though years of change had passed by and her line had ceased to rule, she still drew a reverence as one of the last of the royal stock of Deira. Her counsel was sought even by nobles and kings; and the double monastery over which she ruled became a seminary of bishops and priests.[1] The sainted John of Beverley was among her scholars. But the name which really throws glory over Whitby is the name neither of king nor bishop but of a cowherd of the house.[2] Though well advanced in years Cædmon had learnt nothing of the art of verse, the alliterative jingle so common among his fellows, "wherefore being sometimes at feasts, when all agreed for glee's sake to sing in turn, he no sooner saw the harp come towards him than he rose from the board and went homewards. Once when he had done thus, and gone from the feast to the stable, where he had that night charge of the cattle, there appeared to him in his sleep One who said, greeting him by

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 23.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 24.

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name, 'Sing, Cædmon, some song to Me.' 'I cannot sing,' he answered; 'for this cause left I the feast and came hither.' He who talked with him answered, 'However that be, you shall sing to Me.' 'What shall I sing?' rejoined Cædmon. 'The beginning of created things,' replied He. When the cowherd stood before Hild at daybreak and told his dream, abbess and brethren alike concluded 'that heavenly grace had been given him by the Lord.' They translated for Cædmon a passage in Holy Writ, bidding him, if he could, put the same into verse. The next morning he gave it them composed in excellent verse; whereon the abbess, understanding the divine grace in the man, bade him quit the secular habit and take on him the monastic life."

Cædmon's Poem.

Piece by piece the sacred story was thus thrown into Cædmon's poem. "He sang of the creation of the world, of the origin of man, and of all the history of Israel; of their departure from Egypt and entering into the Promised Land; of the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; of the terror of future judgment, the horror of hell-pangs, and the joys of heaven." To men of that day this sudden burst of song seemed a thing necessarily divine. "Others after him strove to compose religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he learned the art of poetry not from men nor of men, but from God." It is hard for a modern reader to enter into Bæda's

enthusiasm, for not only are parts of the poems which have passed under Cædmon's name due to other writers, though of the same poetic school, but they have reached us only in fragments of a later West-Saxon version,[1] and their Biblical paraphrases are often literal and tedious. But where the herdsman gives the rein to his own fancy, he at once shows himself a great poet. He wrought no change indeed in the outer form of English song. His verse is like that of other singers, accented and alliterative, without conscious art or development or the delight that springs from reflection, a verse swift and direct, but leaving behind it a sense of strength rather than of beauty, obscured too by harsh metaphors and involved construction. But it is eminently the verse of warriors, the brief passionate expression of brief passionate emotions. Image after image, phrase after phrase, starts out vivid, harsh, and emphatic. The very metre is rough with a sort of self-violence and repression; the verses fall like sword-strokes in the thick of battle. His love of natural description, the background of melancholy

[1] Save nine lines of the original opening which have been preserved in an early manuscript of Bæda's history. Recent criticism restricts the work of Cædmon to the poem of "Genesis," assigning "Exodus" and "David" to a nameless successor, and the closing fragment, known as "Christ and Satan," to an altogether later time. Even in the "Genesis," verses 245-851, which include the famous passage about Satan, are now believed to be an interpolation in Cædmon's work, drawn perhaps from a lost Old German poem.

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which gives its pathos to English verse, Cædmon only shared with earlier singers. But the faith of Christ had brought in, as we have seen, new realms of fancy. The legends of the heavenly light, Bæda's story of "The Sparrow," show the side of English temperament to which Christianity appealed—its sense of the vague, vast mystery of the world and of man, its dreamy revolt against the narrow bounds of experience and life. It was this new poetic world which combined with the old in the epic of Cædmon. On the other hand the enthusiasm for the Christian God, faith in whom had been bought so dearly by years of desperate struggle, breaks out in long rolls of sonorous epithets of praise and adoration. The temper of the poet brings him near to the earlier fire and passion of the Hebrew, as the events of his time brought him near to the old Bible history with its fights and wanderings.[1] "The wolves sing their dread evensong; the fowls of war, greedy of battle, dewy feathered, screamed around the host of Pharaoh," as wolf howled and eagle screamed round the host of Penda. Everywhere Cædmon is a type of the new grandeur, depth, and fervour of tone which the German race was to give to the religion of the East.

Effect of monastic movement on art.

English poetry however was far from ending with Cædmon. His successors rivalled him in

[1] The "Exodus," as I have said, is now assigned to another singer: but he is of Cædmon's school.

grandeur and sometimes surpassed him in art. The lyrics and eclogues of Cynewulf,[1] a minstrel at the Northumbrian court in the middle of the century, are the noblest and most finished monuments of Old English verse; and the bulk of the poems which we now possess in West-Saxon versions are held by modern critics to be in reality fragments of the poetic literature which at this time flourished so abundantly in Northumbria. Meanwhile the same impulse that gave Englishmen their earliest poetry brought back to Britain its art. Benedict Biscop had not witnessed the triumph of his party in the Synod of Whitby, for he had already departed on a fresh pilgrimage to Rome; and though he accompanied Theodore on his journey to England, it was only at the close of a fresh pilgrimage to the shrine of the Apostles that he again appeared in Northumbria in the year 674.[2] Ecgfrith at once made him a grant from the folk-land at the mouth of the Wear; but Benedict had hardly begun the erection of his monastery when he passed into Gaul to find masons "who could build him a church of stone after the Roman style."[3] Nothing shows more

[1] Hazlitt's ed. of Warton's Hist. Engl. Poetry, vol. ii. Introd. pp. 16, 17.

[2] The life of Benedict is given by Bæda in the opening of his "Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth." Hussey's Bæda, p. 316 *et seq.*

[3] "Gallias petens cæmentarios qui lapideam sibi ecclesiam juxta Romanorum . . . morem facerent . . . attulit."—Bæda, Vit. Abbat. p. 319.

vividly the utter destruction of the Roman life in Britain than the fact that with Roman buildings still rising, even if half ruined, before their eyes, the very tradition of the building art had passed away, and that architecture had to be brought back to Britain as a foreign thing. With architecture[1] returned other arts. Glass-making was as unknown in the island as building, and it was again from Gaul that Benedict imported glass-makers to glaze the windows of his church and to teach Englishmen their art.[2] It was in the same way to the sacred vessels and vestments which he was forced to bring from abroad that the English owed their knowledge of the arts of gold-work and embroidery, in both of which they soon came to excel. A later visit to Rome brought to their knowledge the art of painting, and the stiff Byzantine figures with which Benedict adorned the interior of his church, the ring of Apostles around its apse with the Virgin in their midst, the stories from Gospel history which lined its southern wall, and the Apocalyptical visions which covered its northern wall, whether they were paintings or mosaics, are memorable as the first instances in the new England of an art which was to give us a Reynolds and a Turner.

[1] So famous did the Northumbrian architects become, that they were called even over the Forth by King Naiton of the Picts.—Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 21.

[2] "Vitri factores artifices Britanniis eatenus incognitos . . . et Anglorum ex eo gentem hujusmodi artificium nosse ac discere, fecerunt."—Bæda, Vit. Abbat. p. 319.

No buildings in Northern Britain could vie with Benedict's Church at Wearmouth save the churches which his friend Wilfrid was raising at the same time in the western moorlands at Ripon, and at Hexham in the valley of the Tyne. Work of artistic restoration was as much a passion with the one as the other, and if Wilfrid had visited Gaul in part for the purpose of consecration, it was in part too to gather "the builders and teachers of nearly every art whom he brought with him in his train on his return to Britain."[1] Through the nine years that followed his arrival at York, the greatness of Bishop Wilfrid seemed to vie with that of Ecgfrith. The new monastic foundations regarded themselves as his monasteries, and at a later time he could boast of the thousands of his monks, while the Northumbrian thegns sent their children to be brought up in his household, whether with the end of their becoming clerks or of serving the king as secular nobles. His wealth and generosity seemed boundless. At one time he entertained Ecgfrith in a feast that lasted three days and three nights; his gifts were lavished on his monasteries and clergy; and his train as he rode through the country was like an army in its numbers and in the kingly splendour of its vesture and weapons.[2] Friendly as the

[1] Eddi. c. xiv. "Cum cantoribus Æddæ et Eonan, et cæmentariis, omnisque pæne artis institoribus, regionem suam rediens."

[2] Eddi. c. xxiv. "Innumerum exercitum sodalium regalibus vestimentis et armis ornatum."

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relations of the King and Bishop were at first, we can hardly wonder that a pomp such as this brought dissension between them,[1] or that Ecgfrith seized on the projects of Theodore as enabling him to curtail a diocese which stretched over the whole extent of his realm.

Theodore in Northumbria.

In 678 Theodore appeared in Northumbria at the king's summons, and we must presume that Wilfrid's resistance to his plans was notorious, for without waiting for his presence the primate deposed him from his see, and proceeded to the division of his diocese. The same plan of falling back on the older tribal divisions was followed here as elsewhere. Eata was set at Hexham as bishop of the Bernicians, and Bosa at York as bishop of the Deirans, while Eadhed was set as bishop over the Lindiswaras.[2] After a formal protest against the primate's action Wilfrid left Northumbria to carry his appeal to Rome, where an agent of Theodore's awaited him on his arrival, and the cause was formally heard and debated at the Papal court. In his appeal Wilfrid virtually consented to a division of his diocese if Rome saw need of this,[3] but he claimed the annulling of the

[1] The story of Wilfrid's friends was that the quarrel began in Ecgfrith's domestic troubles with his queen Æthelreda and the part which Wilfrid took in them.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 12.

[3] "Et si rursus in eadem parochia, cui præfui, præsules adhibere præviderit, saltem tales jubeat prævidere promovendos, cum quibus possim, pacifica atque tranquilla inter nos concordia obtinente, Deo unanimiter deservire."—Eddi. c. xxx.

sentence of deposition as uncanonical, and his claim was allowed. With bulls and letters from the Papal see[1] he again appeared at Ecgfrith's court; but they were rejected as having been obtained by bribery,[2] and by the order of the Witan Wilfrid was thrown into prison, and only released at the end of nine months. Even then Ecgfrith's hostility prevented his finding a refuge in either Mercia or Wessex, and he at last only succeeded in hiding himself behind the screen of the Andredsweald among the South Saxons.

Conversion of South Saxons.

The South Saxons were the one English people who still remained pagan, for though their king Ædilwalch had been baptized at Wulfhere's bidding some twenty years before,[3] and an Irish missionary, Dicul, had set up a little monastery at Bosham, yet no impression seems to have been made on the people at large. It was not the first time that Wilfrid had encountered them, for on his return from his consecration in Gaul the ship in which he was crossing the Channel had been driven upon their shores, and the wild wreckers had rushed to plunder it with threats of death to the crew if they resisted them. A priest, who, standing on a high mound, strove by incantations to "bind the hands" of the sailors, was struck dead by a stone flung from the ship, and so wild

[1] Eddi. c. xxxiv.

[2] "Diffamaverunt . . . ut pretio redempta essent scripta." Eddi. c. xxxiv.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 13.


SOUTH BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
British Names... Belgae, Roman...REGNUM, English... Badburh, Modern... Badbury
CORINIUM
Cirenceaster
Cirencester
Bampton
R. Thames
Faringdon
Vale of the White Horse
R. Ock
Abingdon
Chalgrove
Dorchester
Chiltern Hills
HERTFORD
Hainault Forest
ESSEX
R. Roding
R. Lea
SULLONIACAE
Brockley Hill
East Saxons
Maidulfsburh
Malmesbury
Wantage
Sinodun Hill
Wallingford
Bensington
Henley
LUNDINIUM
Lundenburh
London
Creccanford
Crayford
Wanborough
Weyland
Smith's Ho.
Ashdown
Downs
Goring
Braden Forest
R. Avon
Bryanburh
Barbury Hill
Marlborough
Wood
Windsor
Wibba's Dun
Wimbledon
Dartford
DUROBRIVAE
Rochester
Wansdyke
Marlborough
Hungerford
R. Kennet
Reading
Bagshot
Staines
Kingston
Merton
VERLUCIO
CUNETIO
Newburh
Newbury
Savernake Forest
Heath
Coway Stakes
Weybridge
R. Wey
R. Mole
Wandle
Otford
Darent
Aegelesford
Aylesford
Devizes
CALLEVA ATREBATUM
Silchester
SURREY
Downs
Salisbury Plain
Selwood Forest
Ethandun
Vale of Pewsey
Guildford
Hanging Stones
Stonehenge
Andover
North
R. Medway
Kent
Ambresburh
Amesbury
SORBIODUNUM
Saerobyrh
Old Sarum
Stratford
Ellandun
R. Wiley
R. Nadder
Mere
Wilton
Salisbury
HANTS
Gewissas
West Saxons
Winte
VENTA BELGARUM
Wintceaster
Winchester
W. Meon
Meonwara
E. Meon
Meon Stoke
ANDERIDA SILVA
Andredsleah, Andredsweald
The Weald
Ashdown Forest
R. Rother
South Saxons
The Forest Ridge
(Iron)
Cranbourne Chase
Cerdicesford
Charford
Canleah
R. Itchen
CLAUSENTUM
Bittern
Hampton
Southampton
Southampton Water
Hamble
R. Meon
Forest of Bere
PORTUS MAGNUS
Porchester
Bignor
R. Arun
Downs
R. Ouse
R. Cuckmere
R. Stour
Mount Badon
Badburh
Badbury
DORSET
Ringwood
REGNUM
Cissanceaster
Chichester
ANDERIDA
Andredesceaster
Pevensey
Beachy Head
Dorsaetan
Poole
R. Frome
The Solent
Spithead
Wihtgaraburh
Carisbrook
Wihtgara
Chichester Water
Cymenesora
Selsea Bill
VECTIS, Wiht
I. of Wight
Walker & Boutall sc.

was the rage of the people at his fall that it was only after a fierce conflict that the rise of the tide, floating the vessel again, enabled Wilfrid and his men to escape to Sandwich.[1] Their wild barbarism was shown yet more in the famine which was ravaging the country when Wilfrid now reached it Rather than die tamely of hunger, forty or fifty men would mount a cliff, and joining hands fling themselves together into the sea.[2] They seem not even to have possessed the knowledge of fishing, and it was partly by the skill with which he used this means of allaying their wants that Wilfrid succeeded in bringing them over to Christianity. Those who refused had to submit to their king's command;[3] and it was in the midst of this new flock that Wilfrid remained for some five years in unaccustomed quiet on the land which Ædilwalch granted to him at Selsey.

Completion of Theodore's work.

Meanwhile Theodore completed his work in the north by the creation of two fresh bishoprics, one of them at Lindisfarne, and the other at Abercorn on the southern shore of the Firth of Forth to include the province of the Picts. The three years' delay before this final step in 682[4] was probably due to a war that sprang up between Mercia and Northumbria in the year that followed the opening of the Primate's work in the north.

[1] Eddi. c. xiii. [2] Bæda, H. E. iv. 13.

[3] Eddi. c. xli. "Quidam voluntarie, alii vero coacti regis imperio, idolatriam deserentes,"

[4] Bæda, H. E. iv. 12.

CHAP. VII. The country of the Lindiswaras still remained a
The Church and the Kingdoms. subject of contention between the two kingdoms.
659-690. It was assailed in 679 even by the peaceful Æthelred, and the armies of the two kings met in a bloody contest on the banks of the Trent.[1] The strife was brought to an end by the intervention of Theodore, and the position which the Archbishop had attained was shown by the acceptance on the part of both states of a treaty of peace which he drew up, and by the consent of Northumbria to an abandonment of its supremacy over the Lindiswaras.[2] Such a consent however shows that Ecgfrith's power was now fatally shaken. The old troubles revived on his northern frontier, where the Scots of Argyle would seem to have received aid in some rising from the men of their blood across the Irish Channel, for in 684 the Northumbrian fleet swept the Irish shores [3] in a raid which seemed like sacrilege to those who loved the home of Aidan and Columba; and where in 685 a rising of the Picts forced Ecgfrith's army again to cross the Firth of Forth.

Nectansmere. A sense of coming ill weighed on Northumbria, and its dread was quickened by a memory of the curses which had been pronounced by the Irish bishops on the king in vengeance for the ravages of his fleet. Nowhere was this sense of coming ill

[1] Bæda, H. E. iv. 21.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 12.
[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 26.

more vivid than in the mind of Cuthbert. Cuthbert had remained at Lindisfarne through a great secession which followed on the Synod of Whitby,[1] and become prior of the dwindled company of brethren,[2] now torn with endless disputes, against which his patience and good-humour struggled in vain. Worn out at last he fled to a little island of basaltic rock, one of a group not far from Ida's fortress of Bamborough, strewn for the most part with kelp and seaweed, the home of the gull and the seal.[3] In the midst of it rose his hut of rough stones and turf, dug deep into the rock and roofed with logs and straw. It was the growing reverence for his sanctity that dragged Cuthbert back, after years of this seclusion, to fill the vacant see of Lindisfarne.[4] He entered Carlisle, which the king had bestowed upon his bishopric, at a moment when all were waiting for news of Ecgfrith's campaign; and as he bent over a Roman fountain which still stood unharmed amongst the ruins of Carlisle, the anxious bystanders thought they caught words of ill-omen falling from the old man's lips. "Perhaps," Cuthbert seemed to murmur, "at this very hour the peril of the fight is over and done." "Watch and pray," he said, when they questioned him on the morrow; "watch and pray." In a few days more a solitary fugitive,

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii c. 26.
[2] Bæda, Life of Cuthbert, c. xvi.
[3] Bæda, Life of Cuthbert, c. xvii. *et seq.*
[4] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 28.

escaped from the slaughter, told that the Picts under Bruidi, their king, had turned desperately to bay as the English army entered Fife; and that Ecgfrith and the flower of his nobles lay, a ghastly ring of corpses, on the far-off moorland of Nectansmere.[1]

Theodore's death.

Terrible as was the blow to Northumbria, it removed the last difficulty in Theodore's path. He was now drawing near the close of his life, and anxious ere he died to secure his work of organization by the reconciliation of the one prelate who still opposed it. Wilfrid, too, was backed by Rome, and to set at nought the judgment of Rome must have seemed to the primate a practical undoing of his earlier efforts to bring about the submission of Britain to the papal see. The personal hostility of Ecgfrith had hitherto stood in the way of any measures of conciliation; but on his fall at Nectansmere, Theodore at once summoned Wilfrid to a conference at London, and a compromise was arranged between the two prelates. By the intercession of the Primate with the new Northumbrian king Alchfrid,[2] Wilfrid was restored to the see of York; but the work of Theodore in the north was left intact, for the see to which Wilfrid returned was simply that of Deira,[3] while the Bernician sees of Lindisfarne and Hexham remained in the

[1] Bæda, Life of Cuthbert (Op. Min. Stevenson), c. 27. Sim. Dur. Hist. Dun. Ecc. (Opera, vol. i. Rolls ed.), lib. i. c. 9.

[2] Bæda, H. E. v. 19.

[3] See Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 171, note.

hands of their former occupants.[1] The submission of Wilfrid was the last success of Theodore in his plan of organization; it was soon followed indeed by the primate's death in 690. His work, as we have seen, had been simply an organization of the episcopate, for with the station or revenues of the lower clergy the Archbishop does not seem to have dealt. But when once the broad outlines of this organization had been laid down in his arrangement of dioceses, the internal development of the English Church followed the general mode of other churches. The settlement of the episcopate was succeeded during the next hundred years by the development of a parish system. The loose system of the mission-station, the monastery from which priest and bishop went forth on journey after journey to preach and baptize, as Aidan went forth from Lindisfarne or Cuthbert from Melrose, naturally disappeared as the land became Christian. The missionaries became settled clergy. The township or group of townships which fell within the holding or patronage of an English noble or landowner became the parish, and its chaplain its parish priest, as the king's chaplain had become the bishop, and the kingdom his diocese. A settled revenue and a fixed code of law were the other pressing needs of the ecclesiastical order; and at the close of the eighth century a source of permanent endowment for the clergy was found in

[1] Eddi. c. xliii. xliv.

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659-690.

the revival of the Jewish payment of tithes, and in the annual gift to Church purposes of a tenth of the produce of the soil; while discipline within the Church itself was provided for by an elaborate code of sin and penance [1] in which the principle of compensation which lay at the root of Teutonic legislation crept into the relations between God and the soul.

[1] The first English penitential is that of Theodore, which may be found in Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 173, etc.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE KINGDOMS

690–829

Political disunion of Britain.

For the next hundred years, from the death of Theodore to the accession of Ecgberht, the Church which the primate had moulded into shape exercised an ever-deepening influence on English feeling. In spite of the continuance of political disunion, the drift towards a national unity grew more and more irresistible. If England could not find a national life in the supremacy of any of its states, it found such a life in the Church; and while the energies of its secular powers were wasted in jealousy or strife, the weight of the Church which embraced them all became steadily greater. But throughout the whole of this period it was the Church alone which expressed this national consciousness. Politically, the hope of a national union grew fainter with every year; and at the moment of Theodore's death such a hope seemed almost at an end. Northumbria had

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definitely sheered off into provincial isolation, and the event which marked the close of Theodore's primacy, the revival of the West-Saxons, completed that parting of the land between three states of nearly equal power out of which it seemed impossible that unity could come.

The West-Saxons

Since their overthrow at Faddiley, a hundred years before, the West-Saxons had been weakened by anarchy and civil war. So terribly had their strength been broken that even the Britons had in turn assailed them, while both of the rival English powers had attacked and defeated them. Eadwine had routed them with a great slaughter. Penda had not only routed them, but taken from them their lands along the lower Severn. Wulfhere had carried on the struggle with the same success: he had torn from them the supremacy over Essex and London, which they had won after the wreck of Æthelberht's overlordship, and then pushing across the Thames had mastered the West-Saxon district of Surrey to the south of it. But in spite of these losses the real strength of the Gewissas had been in no ways lessened. Their defeats had been simply owing to their internal divisions, and these divisions never broke that oneness which was the special characteristic of their national life. Mercia had been made by the fusion of many different states, and even Northumbria had been created by the forced union of two warring peoples. But Wessex had grown into being through the

simple extension over its surface of one West-Saxon people; and when divisions rent it asunder, they were divisions, not in the body of the people itself, but simply in its kingly house. Each fragment of Welsh ground, as it was won, seems to have been made into an under kingdom for some one of the royal kin; and it was the continual struggle of these under-kings against the ruler whom they owned as the head king of the race, a struggle begotten no doubt from the yet more fatal contest of the houses of Ceawlin and Cutha for the head kingship itself, which distracted the energies of the West-Saxons.[1]

Revival of Wessex.

But whenever these causes of distraction were removed, each interval of order showed that the warlike vigour of the people was as great as of old. A short restoration of tranquillity under Cenwealh sufficed, as we have seen, to give them back their superiority over the Britons, and to push their frontier to the Parret.[2] A second interval of order in 682 strengthened King Centwine to drive the Britons as far as the Quantocks. And at this moment a third rally of the Gewissas enabled them to turn on their assailants to the east, and again after a few years' struggle to take rank with the two rival powers of Britain. Losses and gains indeed had strangely altered the aspect

[1] Freeman's "Ine," Part I. Somersetshire Archæol. Proceed. vol. xviii.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 652, 658, 682.


SOUTH WEST BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
British Names..........Damnonii
Roman Names...........AQUAE SULIS
English Names..........Bathanceaster
Modern Names.........Bath
MONMOUTH
GLAMORGAN
ISCA SILURUM
Caerlon
VENTA SILURUM
Aust Pass.
GLOUCESTER
Maidulfsburh
Malmesbury
Deorham
577
Chippenham
Marlborough
Wanborough
Braden Forest
556
Marlborough Downs
Smith's Ho.
Hungerford
Mouth of the Severn
Bristol
R. Avon
R. Frome
AQUAE SULIS
Bathanceaster
Bath
Wansdyke
VERLUCIO
CUNETIO
Salisbury Plain
Mendip Hills
Bradford
Selwood Forest
Frome
FOSSE WAY
Hanging Stones
Stonehenge
Andover
Ambresburh
Amesbury
SORBIODUNUM
Searoburh
Old Sarum
Salisbury
R. Wiley
825
Ellandun
Mere
Wilton
Watchet
Exmoor
Quantock Hills
Athelney
Glastonbury
Somersætan
R. Parret
R. Tone
Taunton
Wellington
SCHALIS
Ilchester
R. Yeo
Sherborne
579
Cerdicesford
Charford
Cranbourne Chase
Mt. Badon
Badburh
Badbury
520
R. Avon
Ringwood
Durotriges
Dornsætan
DORSET
R. Stour
Poole
R. Frome
Wareham
Swanage
DURNOVARIA
Dorchester
VECTIS, Wiht
I. of Wight
Solent
R. Exe
ISCA DAMNONIORUM
Exeter
Defnasaetan
DEVON
R. Taw
R. Torridge
R. Tamar
R. Dart
Cornwealan
CORNWALL
Damnonii
Walker & Boutall sc.

of Wessex since the days of Ceawlin. In those days its western border stopped at Selwood and the valley of the Frome, while its future extension pointed northward from the territory it had won on the Cotswolds and the Severn valley towards the valleys of the Weaver and the Dee. But in the years that had passed since Ceawlin's fall not only had any extension of Wessex in this direction become impossible, but she had actually lost the territory of the Hwiccas, and her northern frontier ran along the Avon by Bath to the upper valley of the Thames. The only part of Central Britain which she preserved at this time was the district of the Four Towns, a district equivalent to our Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire; while on the east she had lost Surrey and the Isle of Wight, and had been even forced to cede to the Mercian king the little Jutish districts of the Meonwaras on the Southampton Water. It seemed as if her extension could now be only to the south-west; and in this quarter the conquests of Cenwealh and Centwine, carrying their frontier in this region as far as the Quantocks, had already added to Wessex a reach of territory whose extent and fertility did much to compensate for the losses elsewhere.

Its Conquest of Southern Britain.

But the West-Saxons were far from consenting to be permanently shut in on the east by the border line that Wulfhere had drawn round them. When Ceadwalla, a king of Ceawlin's line, mounted

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the West-Saxon throne in 685,[1] and, after crushing the rival under-kings of the house of Cerdic, gathered all the Gewissas beneath his sway, the strength of his realm was at once seen in the rapidity with which it broke through this frontier. In some months of fierce fighting Ceadwalla again set up the West-Saxon supremacy over Sussex, and made the Isle of Wight his own after a massacre of its inhabitants.[2] From Sussex Ceadwalla pushed on to Kent; but his attempt to extend his rule over all Southern Britain met with a more luckless issue. He was himself repulsed in a first campaign; a second saw his brother Mul burned in a house which he was plundering; and in 688 Ceadwalla threw down his crown in disgust and withdrew from the land to die a pilgrim at Rome.[3] His work, however, found better fortunes in the hands of his successor Ine. After the close of a civil war which broke out on Ceadwalla's withdrawal, Ine, who, like his predecessor, was of the branch of Ceawlin, succeeded in again uniting the Gewissas under a single sway; and so vigorous were his attacks upon Kent that in 694 the realm paid the

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 685.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 15, 16. If we accept Malmesbury's statement (Gest. Pontif.; Rolls ed. p. 140), Sussex lay within Æthelberht's imperium, and passed on the wreck of it under the supremacy of the West-Saxons. In Wulfhere's day it was certainly under Mercia; but it had probably slipped away of late from Mercian rule, as it had again become heathen.

[3] Eng. Chron. a. 686, 687, 688. Will. Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 34. Bæda, H. E. v. 7.

blood-fine for Mul and bowed to the West-Saxon supremacy.[1] Its submission carried Ine's rule along the whole southern coast from Dorset to Thanet; and we may believe that not only the whole land south of the Thames but also Essex passed under the West-Saxon supremacy, as we find London from this time no longer in Mercian hands, but owning Ine as its lord.[2]

Conquests from Dyvnaint.

How these possessions were torn from Æthelred's grasp we cannot tell, for under Æthelred Mercian history is all but a blank, and there is nothing to show whether Ine owed his successes to the sword or to some civil strife which distracted the Mercian realm.[3] In 704, after a reign of nearly thirty years, Æthelred withdrew to a monastery: and his nephew Coenred, the son of Wulfhere, succeeded him on the Mercian throne.[4] The conflict with Wessex was still, however, deferred: for Ine, content with his gains south of Thames, turned to a new field of conquest on his border in the

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 694. Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 35.

[2] Ine speaks of Earconwald, the bishop of London and the East-Saxons from 675 to 693, as "my bishop," in the opening of his Laws (Thorpe, "Laws and Institutes," vol. i. p. 103). London would thus seem to have submitted before the close of the contest with Kent. In a letter dated 705, we have notice of quarrels between Ine and the East-Saxon rulers who had entertained exiles from Wessex. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 274.

[3] In 697 Æthelred's wife, Osthryth, was put to death by the "primates" of Southumbria. Eng. Chron. a. 697. Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 24. After this he seems to have made over Southumbria to Wulfhere's son, Coenred, to whom he gave up the throne in 704, retiring to the monastery of Bardney.

[4] Bæda, H. E. v. 19, 24.

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west. Here he took up the work of Cenwealh and Centwine by marching in 710 on the British King Geraint.[1] Shrunken as it was from its old area, the realm of Dyvnaint still stretched from the Quantocks to the Land's End, and its king seems to have exercised some supremacy across the Bristol Channel over the princes of the opposite coast.[2] The extent of Geraint's dominions made him the first among the British princes of his day. Even the English regarded him as a powerful ruler, and Ealdhelm addressed him as "the glorious lord of the western realm."[3] But he was unable to meet the shock of Ine's attack, and a hard-fought battle gave the West-Saxons a fertile territory along the Tone with the districts of Crewkerne and Ilminster. On the border of the newly-won territory, where a spur of the Black-downs runs out towards the ridge of the Quantocks, the great flat of which this part of Somersetshire consists narrows into a mere neck of land; and in the midst of this neck, on the banks of a little stream which wandered through it to the marshes of the Parrett, Ine set up a fortress that served as an admirable military position for the defence of his newly-conquered territory, or as a starting-point for a new advance on Dyvnaint. The fortress

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 710.

[2] See Freeman's "Ine," Somerset. Archæol. Proceedings, vol. xviii.

[3] "Domino gloriosissimo occidentalis regni sceptra gubernanti." Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 268.

grew into a town, and our Taunton, or Town on the Tone, still, even as a linguistic border-land, preserves the memory of this advance of Ine.[1]

The tract of country which had passed, with the successive conquests of Cenwealh, Centwine, and Ine, into the hands of the West-Saxons, is that which took the name of the land of the Somersætas, or our Somerset. Few districts better illustrate the physical and social revolution which was wrought by the English conquerors. Under the Romans it had shared in the wealth and prosperity which characterized the country north of the Avon. One of its towns, Bath, stood on an equal footing with Glevum and Corinium in the strife with the invaders; and the district around its second town, Ilchester, was thickly studded with the villas of rich provincials, whose wealth was probably derived from the lead mines which had been worked even in British days along the crest of Mendip. In the chaos of native rule this wealth and order had long passed away; but the raids of the West-Saxons must have completed its ruin. The towns were left desolate as elsewhere. Bath, indeed, which had fallen into English hands as early as Ceawlin's day, and was

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 722. "Tanton that Ine formerly built." Mr. Elworthy, in his Introduction to the "Dialect of West Somerset," says: "The people of the little village of Ruishton, only a mile and a half to the east of Taunton, speak the eastern dialect; while at Bishop's Hull, one mile to the west, they speak the western."

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now detached from this region as a part of Mercia, already saw a new life rising up round the monastery which had been founded among its ruins; but the peasant long told amidst the wreck of Ilchester a legend of its fall. Bristol was not as yet, and only villages and hamlets broke the space between Bath and Exeter; while the country-houses of the provincial landowners lay burned or in ruin, and the mines from which their wealth had been drawn were abandoned or forgotten. Above all, the industrial works which the Romans had constructed for the drainage of the marshes that stretched into the very heart of the country fell unheeded into decay; the sea burst again through the neglected barriers at the mouth of the Parrett and the Brue; and the height which is known as the Tor rose like an island out of a waste of flood-drowned fen that stretched westward to the Channel.

Ine's rule.

From one of the English families who chose it as their settlement a little hamlet at the base of the Tor took its name of Glastonbury, the burh of the Glæstings.[1] The spot, however, was already famous as a religious shrine of the Britons. It had long been a place of pilgrimage, for the tradition that a second Patrick rested there drew to it the wandering scholars of Ireland;[2] and the

[1] Kemble, Sax. in Engl. i. 465.

[2] "Anon. Life of Dunstan." Stubb's Memorials of Dunstan, p. 10.

new relation of Englishmen and Welshmen was shown in the reverence which Ine paid to this British shrine. The monastery became an English one, richly endowed by the king;[1] and beside its "ancient church, built by no art of man," a rude log-building left by its Welsh owners, and carefully preserved by the English comers, Ine founded his own abbey-church of stone.[2] The same mingling of the two races is seen in another conquest of this time. Side by side with their progress across Somersetshire, the West-Saxons must have been pushing their way through the woodlands of Dorset; and even before Ine's conquests reached the Tone, an advance in this quarter from the south seems to have given them Exeter. By an arrangement which marks the new temper of the conquerors, Exeter became a double city.[3] Its southern half was henceforth English; its northern—as is still marked by the Celtic names of the saints to whom its churches in this quarter are dedicated—remained in the hands of the Britons. The laws of Ine[4] which still

[1] For his grant see Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," vol. iii. p. 306.

[2] For the successive churches of Glastonbury see Freeman, "Ine," part ii. Somerset. Archæol. Proceed. vol. xx.

[3] Kerslake, paper on "Exeter" (Archæol. Journal, vol. xxx. p. 214 *et seq.*). Will. Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. ii. sec. 135, says of Æthelstan, "Illos (Cornewallenses) quoque impigre adorsus, ab Exeestrâ quam ad id temporis æquo cum Anglis jure inhabitarant, cedere compulit."

[4] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws and Institutes," vol. i. pp. 119, 123, 139.

remain to us show him as providing for the administrative needs of the mixed population which dwelt in the district that had been added to the West-Saxon realm; and it was perhaps the same mixed character of its inhabitants which induced him to carry out Theodore's scheme of division in his own kingdom,[1] and while leaving Daniel at Winchester as bishop of the older Wessex,—that is to say, our Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and the bulk of Wiltshire,—to group the whole country west of Selwood and the Frome valley as a new bishopric for his kinsman Ealdhelm.[2]

Ine and Mercia.

From this organization of his British conquests, however, Ine was called away by an attack on his northern frontier. Mercia had never forgiven the loss of her dominion across the Thames, and the new strength which Wessex drew from her conquests in Somerset would only spur the Midland Kingdom to a decisive struggle for the supremacy of the South. In 715 Ceolred, the son of Æthelred, who six years before had succeeded Coenred on

[1] Bæda, H. E. v. 18.

[2] It was in this way that the diocese of Ealdhelm came to include that portion of the present Wiltshire about Malmesbury and Bradford which represents the forest tract which Cenwealh had won, as well as Dorset and Somersetshire. Although the West-Saxon shires are of older formation than those of middle England, and no doubt mainly represent the tribal settlements of distinct West-Saxon peoples, yet I think this diocesan division shows that the formation of Wiltshire with its actual boundaries is later in date than this division of the dioceses at the beginning of the eighth century.

the Mercian throne, again took up the strife. He must have marched into the very heart of Wessex,[1] for Ine met the foe at Wanborough, on the chalk-heights above the Vale of White Horse, where his ancestor Ceawlin had suffered his crowning defeat a century before. The battle was a long and bloody one; but the absence of all account of its issue shows that Ceolred's attack failed, and that the hope of subjecting the West-Saxons to a Mercian sway was for the while at an end. The victory of Ine indeed seemed to raise Wessex again to a front rank among the powers of Britain. But in the hour of his glory the king had again to face the civil strife which was the curse of Wessex; for after thirty-three years of a glorious reign the old anarchy broke out in revolts of Æthelings sprung like himself from the blood of Cerdic, but sprung from the rival line of Ceol. Ine indeed held his own. One rebel, Cynewulf, was slain; another, Ealdberht, was driven to take refuge among the South-Saxons.[2] But the strife went on; and a wild legend tells the story of the disgust which at last drove Ine from the throne. He had feasted royally at one of his country-houses, and as he rode from it on the morrow his queen bade him turn back thither. The king returned to find his house stripped of curtains and vessels, and foul with refuse and the dung of cattle, while in the royal bed where he had slept

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 715. [2] Eng. Chron. a. 721, 725.

with Æthelburh rested a sow with her farrow of pigs. The scene had no need of the Queen's comment:—"See, my lord, how the fashion of this world passeth away!"[1] In 726 Ine laid down his troubled crown, and like his predecessor Ceadwalla sought peace and death in a pilgrimage to Rome.[2]

Æthelbald of Mercia.

The withdrawal of Ine and the anarchy of Wessex roused anew the hopes of its rival in Mid-Britain. In 716, a year after his defeat by Ine at Wanborough, the Mercian ruler Ceolred fell frenzy-smitten at his board,[3] and his realm passed into the hands of the most vigorous of its kings. Among those who sought Guthlac's retirement at Crowland was Æthelbald, a son of Penda's brother Alweo, flying from Ceolred's hate. Driven off again and again by the king's pursuit, Æthelbald still returned to the little hut he had built beside the hermitage, and comforted himself in hours of despair with his companion's words. "Know how to wait," said Guthlac, "and the kingdom will come to thee; not by violence or rapine, but by the hand of God." On Ceolred's death indeed his people chose Æthelbald, who was already famous for his great strength and bravery, for their king.[4] Æthelbald took up again with better

[1] Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 35.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 7.
[3] Eng. Chron. a. 716. Letter of Boniface to Æthelbald. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 355.
[4] Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 79; Eng. Chron. a. 716.

Walker & Boutall sc.

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fortunes the enterprise in which his predecessor had been foiled—his struggle for the supremacy of the south. During the first ten years of his reign indeed he shrank from a conflict with the victor of Wanborough; but in the anarchy that broke out on Ine's withdrawal[1] Wessex lay helpless before him; and in the struggle that followed Æthelbald overran the whole of the West-Saxon country, till his siege and capture of the royal town of Somerton in 733 seemed to end the war.[2] For twenty years the overlordship of Mercia was recognized by all Britain south of the Humber. It was at the head of the forces, not of Mercia only, but of East-Anglia and Kent, as well as of the West-Saxons,[3] that Æthelbald marched against the Welsh on his western frontier; and he styled himself "King not of the Mercians only, but of all the neighbouring peoples who are called by the common name of Southern English."[4] He had indeed to meet constant outbreaks of revolt among his new subjects. But for twenty years he seems to have met them with success; and it was not till 754 that a general rising forced him to call his whole strength to the field. At the head of his own Mercians and of the subject hosts of Kent, Essex, and East-Anglia, Æthelbald marched to the field of Burford, where the West-Saxons were again marshalled under the

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 728.
[2] Eng. Chron. a. 733.
[3] Huntingdon, Hist. Angl. (Arnold), pp. 119, 121.
[4] Charter in Palgrave, "English Commonwealth," vol. ii. p. 218.

golden dragon of their race. But the numbers of his host could not avert his doom. After hours of desperate fighting in the forefront of the battle, a sudden panic seized the Mercian king, and the supremacy of Mid-Britain passed for ever away, as he fled first of his army from the field.[1]

Northumbria at peace.

While the two powers of Southern Britain were wasting their energies in this desperate struggle, Northumbria remained apart in a peace which was only broken by occasional troubles on her northern border and by the beginnings of that anarchy which at a later time was to wreck her greatness. The fall of Ecgfrith in 685 had shaken indeed the fabric of the realm; for the triumphant Picts pressed in upon it from the north, and drove Bishop Trumwine from Abercorn,[2] while their success woke the Britons to fresh revolt. Aldfrith, however, a brother of Ecgfrith, who was called from a refuge at Hii to the Northumbrian throne,[3] showed himself in this hour of need worthy of the blood from which he sprang by reasserting his mastery over the men of Cumbria and Galloway, and exchanging the claim of lordship over the Picts for a profitable alliance with them. Even in the north, however, his work was limited within

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 752. (From the death of Bæda, in 735, to the reign of Æthelwulf, the entries of the English Chronicle are wrong by two years. See Stubbs's edition of Hoveden, preface to vol. i. p. lxxxix. *et seq.*) Huntingdon, Hist. Ang. (Arnold), p. 121.

[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 26.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 26; Life of Cuthbert, c. xxiv.

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the bounds of self-defence; and a consciousness of weakness is seen in the change which passes over the policy of his realm. All effort at conquest was for a while abandoned; and the state which had won England by its sword from heathendom, and given her by its victories the first notion of a national unity, turned to bestow on her the more peaceful gifts of art, letters, and a new poetry. The twenty years of Aldfrith's rule were years of peace and order, in which the literary and artistic impulse which had been given to Northumbria alike by the Celtic and Roman churches produced striking results. Letters above all sprang vigorously to the front. The books which Benedict brought from Rome in visit after visit[1] quickened the intellectual temper of the country; and it is not too much to say that under Aldfrith, himself a man of learning and study,[2] Northumbria became the literary centre of Western Europe. The first form the new learning took was naturally a biographical one; at the close of Aldfrith's reign, indeed, a school of biography was already in full vigour, remnants of whose work remain to us in the anonymous "Life of Cuthbert" and in the "Life of Wilfrid," by Æddi.[3] But this biographical outpouring soon lost itself in a larger

[1] Bæda, Vit. Abbat. (ed. Hussey), pp. 320, 323.

[2] See his purchase of a Cosmography from Abbot Ceolfrid. Bæda, Vit. Abbat. (ed. Hussey), p. 327.

[3] The "Life of Cuthbert" was the earlier of the two works; that of Wilfrid may be dated about 709.

literary current, and through the troubled reigns of Aldfrith's three successors, Osred, Coenred, and Osric,[1] as well as the more peaceful reign of their successor, the scholarly Ceolwulf, the learning of the age seemed to be summed up in a Northumbrian scholar.

Bæda.

Bæda—the Venerable Bede, as later times styled him—was born in 673, nine years after the Synod of Whitby, on ground which passed a year later to Benedict Biscop as the site of the great abbey which he reared by the mouth of the Wear.[2] His youth was trained and his long tranquil life was wholly spent at Jarrow, in an offshoot of Benedict's house which was founded by his friend Ceolfrid. Bæda tells us in his own charming way a story of his boyhood there; how one of the great plagues which followed the Synod of Whitby swept off every monk who knew how to sing in choir save the abbot and this little scholar of his; and how the two stoutly kept up the service, and dropping only the antiphons, struggled through the psalms amidst much weeping and sobbing till the rest of the brethren were sufficiently instructed in the church-chant to suffer the full service to be restored.[3] Bæda never stirred from Jarrow. "I

[1] Osred, who was a mere boy, reigned eleven years, from 705–716; Coenred two years, 716–718; Osric eleven, from 718–729; Ceolwulf eight years, from 729–737.

[2] Bæda, H. E. v. 24; Vit. Abbat. (Hussey's Bæda), p. 318.

[3] Anon. Hist. Abbat. in Opera Minora Bædæ (Stevenson), sec. 14.

spent my whole life in the same monastery," he says, "and while attentive to the rule of my order and the service of the Church my constant pleasure lay in learning, or teaching, or writing."[1] The words sketch for us a scholar's life, the more touching in its simplicity that it is the life of the first great English scholar. The quiet grandeur of a life consecrated to knowledge, the tranquil pleasure that lies in learning and teaching and writing, dawned in fact for Englishmen in the story of Bæda. While still young he became teacher; and six hundred monks, besides strangers that flocked thither for instruction, formed his school of Jarrow.[2] It is hard to imagine how, among the toils of the schoolmaster and the duties of the monk, Bæda could have found time for the composition of the numerous works that made his name famous in the West. But materials for study had accumulated in Northumbria through the journeys of Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop and the libraries which were forming at Wearmouth and York. The tradition of the older Irish teachers still lingered to direct the young scholar into that path of Scriptural interpretation to which he chiefly owed his fame. Greek, a rare accomplishment in the West, came to him from the school which the Greek Archbishop Theodore founded

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 24.

[2] Bæda, Vit. Abbat. 328. Note on Greek MS. found in England by Æneas Sylvius. Creighton's History of the Papacy, ii. 237.

beneath the walls of Canterbury; while his skill in the ecclesiastical chant was derived from a Roman cantor whom Pope Vitalian sent in the train of Benedict Biscop. Little by little the young scholar made himself master of the whole range of the science of his time: he became, as Burke rightly styled him, "the father of English learning."[1] The tradition of the older classic culture was revived for England in his quotations of Plato and Aristotle, of Seneca and Cicero, of Lucretius and Ovid. Virgil cast over him the spell that he cast over Dante; verses from the Æneid break his narratives of martyrdoms, and the disciple ventures on the track of the great master in a little eclogue descriptive of the approach of spring.

His work.

His work was done with small aid from others. "I am my own secretary," he writes. "I make my own notes. I am my own librarian." But forty-five works remained after his death to attest his prodigious industry. In his own eyes and those of his contemporaries the most important among these were the commentaries and homilies upon various books of the Bible which he had

[1] As a writer among Englishmen Bæda had been preceded by Aldhelm, who died in 709, as well as by the anonymous biographer of Cuthbert (between 697 and 705). Æddi, in his biography of Wilfrid (finished about 709), is his contemporary; for Bæda's earliest works seem to date from the beginning of the eighth century (see article "Bæda," by Stubbs, Dict. Christ. Biog. i. 300). The "De Sex Ætatibus" was written in 707. His other Scriptural, chronological, and biographical works preceded the Ecclesiastical History, which was ended in 731.

drawn from the writings of the Fathers. But he was far from confining himself to theology. In treatises compiled as text-books for his scholars Bæda threw together all that the world had then accumulated in astronomy and meteorology, in physics and music, in philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, medicine. But the encyclopædic character of his researches left him in heart a simple Englishman. He loved his own English tongue; he was skilled in English song; his last work was a translation into English of the Gospel of St. John, and almost the last words that broke from his lips were some English rimes upon death. But the noblest proof of his love of England lies in the work which immortalizes his name. In his "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," which he began just before the death of Aldfrith, in 704, Bæda became the first English historian. His work stretches over nearly a century and a half, from the landing of Augustine in 597 to the year 731 in which the old man laid down his pen. A prefatory opening, compiled from older writers, from legends and martyrologies, sums up the story of Britain under the Romans and its conquest by the English; but it is with the landing of the Roman missionaries that the work really begins. There is little need for Bæda's modest excuse. "If in what I have written any one find matters other than what is true, let him not blame me for cleaving to what is the true rule of historic

narrative and simply gathering from common fame the facts I have resolved to record for the instruction of after-times."[1] What is really marvellous is the pains which he took in collecting and sifting his information. Where he found friends as zealous as Albinus and Nothelm at Canterbury his story is accurate and full. Even the Papal archives gave up the letters of Archbishops Laurentius and Honorius to his indefatigable research. His work was indeed limited by the difficulty of procuring information in the ruder states. The history of Northumbria, which lay within his own sphere of observation, is told with admirable fulness and force. Wessex, Mercia, and East-Anglia fare worse, in spite of the information which reached Bæda from Bishop Daniel of Winchester and the monks of Lastingham; but fortunately they formed during most of this period the least important part of the historic field. The conversion of Kent, the warfare of Penda, the fight of Northumbria for the Cross, the preaching of Aidan, the wanderings of Cuthbert and Chad—these were the main events which Bæda had to follow, and on all these he is graphic and full.

His death.

What Bæda owed to no informant was his own exquisite faculty of story-telling. His story of Gregory in the market-place remains as familiar as a household word to English children. The

[1] Preface to his "Ecclesiastical History."

quaint anecdotes of Cuthbert, the tender details of the love that knit Bishop Aidan to King Oswald, are as charmingly told as the story of the Sparrow which marks the conversion of Northumbria. But no story even of Bæda's telling is so touching as the story of his death.[1] Two weeks before the Easter of 735 the old man was seized with an extreme weakness and loss of breath. He still preserved, however, his usual pleasantness and good humour, and in spite of prolonged sleeplessness continued his lectures to the pupils about him. Verses of his own English tongue broke from time to time from the master's lip—rude rimes that told how before the "need-fare," Death's stern "must-go," none can enough bethink him what is to be his doom for good or ill. The tears of Bæda's scholars mingled with his song. "We never read without weeping," writes one of them. So the days rolled on to Ascension-tide, and still master and pupils toiled at their work, for Bæda longed to bring to an end his version of St. John's Gospel into the English tongue and his extracts from Bishop Isidore.. "I don't want my boys to read a lie," he answered those who would have had him rest, "or to work to no purpose after I am gone." A few days before Ascension-tide his sickness grew upon him, but he spent the whole day in teaching, only saying cheerfully to

[1] Given by a certain Cuthbert in a letter to Cuthwine; Sim. Durh. Hist. Dun. Ecc. lib. i. c. 15.

his scholars, "Learn with what speed you may; I know not how long I may last." The dawn broke on another sleepless night, and again the old man called his scholars round him and bade them write. "There is still a chapter wanting," said the scribe, as the morning drew on, "and it is hard for thee to question thyself any longer." "It is easily done," said Bæda; "take thy pen and write quickly." Amid tears and farewells the day wore on to eventide. "There is yet one sentence unwritten, dear master," said the boy. "Write it quickly," bade the dying man. "It is finished now," said the little scribe at last. "You speak truth," said the master; "all is finished now." Placed upon the pavement, his head supported in his scholar's arms, his face turned to the spot where he was wont to pray, Bæda chanted the solemn "Glory to God." As his voice reached the close of his song he passed quietly away.

The sons of Eata.

First among English scholars, first among English theologians, first among English historians, it is in the monk of Jarrow that English learning strikes its roots. But the quiet tenour of his life was broken by the signs of coming disorganization in Northumbria: and though this anarchy was quelled by the scholarly Ceolwulf, to whom Bæda dedicated his history, after eight years of rule this king laid down his sword in disgust,[1] and withdrew to a monastery. His reign however had been

[1] Sim. Durh. Hist. Dun. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 1.

marked by an ecclesiastical change which shows how strongly the provincial feeling of severance in the three kingdoms was struggling against the centralizing action of the Church. At the close of his life the state of things which he saw about him drew from Bæda a scheme of religious reformation, one of whose chief features was the revival of the Archbishoprick which Pope Gregory had originally designed to set up in the north;[1] and this suggestion was soon realized by the occupant of the see of York, Ecgberht, who procured from Rome his recognition as Archbishop in 735.[2] From this time, therefore, so far as Northumbria was concerned, the work of Theodore was to a great extent undone; the supremacy of the see of Canterbury found a rival across the Humber; and the political isolation of the northern kingdom was reflected in its religious independence. The close connection of the new see and the northern throne was seen three years later, in 738, when the Archbishop's brother, Eadberht, became king of the Northumbrians. The joint character of their rule was shown in the "stycas" or copper pieces which were coined in the mint at York, and which bear the legend of the king on one side and of the primate on the other.[3]

Never had the kingdom shown greater vigour

[1] Epist. ad Ecgbertum, in Hussey's Bæda, p. 332.
[2] Appendix Bædæ, a. 735, in Hussey's Bæda, p. 314.
[3] Article by Raine on "Ecgberht," Dict. Christ. Biog. ii. 50.

within or without than under these two sons of Eata. Eadberht showed himself from the outset of his reign an active and successful warrior. Though attacked at the same time on his southern border by Æthelbald of Mercia, he carried on in 740 a successful war against the Picts;[1] and ten years later recovered from the Britons of Strath-Clyde the district of Kyle in Ayrshire.[2] So great was his renown that the Frank King Pippin sent envoys to Northumbria with costly gifts and offers of his friendship.[3] Meanwhile Archbishop Ecgberht had shown as restless an activity in the establishment of a school at York. We have already seen the return of life to this city in the reign of Eadwine, and though it seems to have been again forsaken by the kings of Bernician race who followed him, it became from Wilfrid's days the religious centre of the North, while under Eadberht, if not before, it had become its political centre.[4] The whole of its northern quarter and

[1] Appendix Bædæ, a. 740, Hussey's Bæda, p. 314.
[2] Ibid. a. 750.
[3] Sim. Durh. Hist. Dun. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 3.
[4] How completely even the main lines of communication which ran through the older town were blotted out by the time of the English settlement, we may see from comparing a ground-plan of the early English streets with those of their Roman predecessors. (For early York, see a map in Mr. Freeman's "Norman Conquest," vol. iv. p. 202.) We see from this that the road from Aldborough to the south, if it still crossed the English city in the line of the Roman Way, diverged widely from this line to cross the Fosse; while the road to Malton which crossed the former at right angles in the heart of Eboracum, ceased to exist in the English York, save in a fragment called Stone-gate. Indeed the Minster with its

much of its eastern had been given up to the bishop and his clergy by Eadwine, doubtless because in its then state of abandonment it was a part of the folk-land, and remained open to give; and in the heart of it the king had reared a little wooden chapel for Paulinus and begun a larger church of stone.[1] But his fall stopped the progress of this building, and Wilfrid in 670 found the church almost in ruins, its windows covered with mere trelliswork, and its roof rotted with the rain.[2] The bishop's energy however soon made this church a rival even of his buildings in Ripon and Hexham, and its enlargement and decoration were actively carried on by Ecgberht, by whose days York had become the settled capital of the kingdom. Ecgberht not only established a school in connection with his church, but supplied its educational needs by gathering the largest library which had yet been seen in Britain, a library in which Pliny and some at least of the works of Aristotle, the orations of Cicero, and the poems of Virgil, Statius, and Lucan, might be seen side by side with grammarians and scholiasts, and in which

buildings lay right across what had been the line of it. The bridge by which it crossed the Ouse and the gate by which it left the town equally disappeared. The name of Stone-gate or street, which marks a part of this line where the modern highway coincided with the line of the old Roman road, would of itself suggest that elsewhere the new lines of occupation lay, not along the paved causeways of old Eboracum, but along unpaved lanes which wandered over its site.

[1] Æddi, c. 16. [2] Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. 14.

the works of two Englishmen at least, Ealdhelm and Bæda, mingled themselves with the long roll of Greek and Latin Fathers.[1]

Ecgberht was himself the leading teacher in his school, instructing its clerks or discussing literary questions with them; and the efficiency of his teaching is shown by such a scholar as Alcuin. Scholars indeed flocked to him from every country; for it was at a moment when learning seemed to be

[1] The list which Alcuin gives us in his poem "De Pontificibus" (Raine's "Historians of Church of York," vol. i. p. 395), is of singular interest as the first catalogue which we have of any English library:—

"Illic invenies veterum vestigia patrum,
Quidquid habet pro se Latio Romanus in orbe,
Græcia vel quidquid transmisit clara Latinis,
Hebraicus vel quod populus bibit imbre superno,
Africa lucifluo vel quidquid lumine sparsit.
Quod pater Hieronymus, quod sensit Hilarius, atque
Ambrosius præsul, simul Augustinus, et ipse
Sanctus Athanasius, quod Orosius edit avitus:
Quidquid Gregorius summus docet, et Leo papa;
Basilius quidquid, Fulgentius atque, coruscant
Cassiodorus item, Chrysostomus atque Johannes.
Quidquid et Athelmus docuit, quid Beda magister,
Quæ Victorinus scripsere Boetius atque,
Historici veteres, Pompeius, Plinius, ipse
Acer Aristoteles, rhetor quoque Tullius ingens.
Quid quoque Sedulius, vel quid canit ipse Juvencus,
Alcimus et Clemens, Prosper, Paulinus, Arator,
Quid Fortunatus, vel quid Lactantius edunt.
Quæ Maro Virgilius, Statius, Lucanus et auctor;
Artis grammaticæ vel quid scripsere magistri,
Quid Probus atque Focas, Donatus, Priscianusve,
Servius, Euticius, Pompeius, Comminianus.
Invenies alios perplures, lector, ibidem
Egregios studiis, arte et sermone magistros,
Plurima qui claro scripsere volumina sensu;
Nomina sed quorum præsenti in carmine scribi
Longius est visum, quam plectri postulet usus."

flickering out both in Ireland and among the Franks that the School of York gathered to itself the intellectual impulse which had been given to Northumbria by Bæda, and preserved that tradition of learning and culture which was to spread again, through Alcuin, over the nations of the west. The school, indeed, long survived its founder, for the glory of the sons of Eata proved but brief. In 756 Eadberht continued his attacks on Strath-Clyde; and allying himself with the Picts, made himself master even of its capital, Alcluyd, or Dumbarton. But at the moment when his triumph seemed complete, his army was utterly destroyed[1] as it withdrew homewards, only a few days after the city's surrender; and so crushing was this calamity, that two years after it not only did Eadberht withdraw to a monastery and leave the throne to his son Osulf, but the Archbishop joined his brother in retirement, till both were laid side by side in the minster at York.[2] With the death of the two sons of Eata the peace of the kingdom disappeared. Men of unknown lineage disputed the throne with kings of the royal stock; revolts of the nobles added to the general disorder; and the fierce blood-shedding which characterized the successive strifes for the crown showed the moral deterioration of the country. Isolated as

[1] Sim. Dunelm. Gest. Reg. a. 756 (Rolls ed., ii. 40).

[2] Sim. Dunelm. Hist. Dun. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 3 (Rolls ed. i. 49).

Northumbria had become, its isolation became even more pronounced in these fifty years of anarchy; for even the intermarriages of its kings with the other kingly houses all but ceased, and the northern realm hardly seemed to form part of the English people.

England and the Continent.

In spite however of this anarchy, Northumbria remained to the last the chief seat of English religion and English learning. In the midst of its political disorder learning and the love of books still flourished at Jarrow and York, and at the close of the century a Northumbrian scholar was the centre of the literary revival at the court of the Franks. It is the correspondence of this scholar, Alcuin, which first reveals to us a change that was at this moment passing over our history. Till now the fortunes of the English people had lain wholly within the bounds of the Britain they had won. With what was left of the Roman Empire the new country held no relations whatever. With the kindred German peoples across the Channel its intercourse was scant and unimportant. But in the eighth century our national horizon suddenly widened, and the fortunes of England became linked to the general fortunes of Western Christendom. The change was brought about by the work of English missionaries in the mother-country of Englishmen. While Ælla and Cerdic were overrunning Britain, the mass of the tribes between Friesland and the Elbe remained

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in their old homeland, unchanged in religion or in institutions. Little or no intercourse seems to have gone on between these Saxons and their offshoot on British soil. But the tie of kinship had never been forgotten; and from the moment when a storm drove Bishop Wilfrid in 677[1] to the Frisian coast a new interest in the race from which their blood was drawn sprang up among Englishmen. Even in the dark hour of Nectansmere a Northumbrian scholar was calling for mission priests to labour "among the nations in Germany to whom the English or Saxons who now inhabit Britain are known to owe their blood and origin;"[2] but nothing had been actually done for their conversion when a way for mission-labour was opened by the sword of the Franks.

The Franks.

The Franks had long stood first in power among the German peoples who settled amidst the wreck of Rome. While Jute and Engle and Saxon were creeping slowly along the southern shores of Britain, their Frankish neighbours on the Lower Rhine had swept over Northern Gaul, over the southern kingdom of the Visigoths, and over the Burgundian realm in the valley of the Rhone. Nor were the Frank conquests limited to what had been Roman ground. Eastward across the Rhine other German tribes, Alemannians,

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 19.
[2] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 9.

Thuringians, and Bavarians, became their tributaries; and at the time when Augustine traversed Frankland on his way to Kent their lordship stretched from the Pyrenees to the Scheldt and from the Bay of Biscay to the Inn. Even at this early time therefore no other Teutonic state could vie either in power or extent of rule with a realm which seemed already more than a match for what remained of the Empire of Rome. But it was long before the influence of the Franks told as it might have been expected to tell on the general politics of the West. The mass of tribes and principalities which owned their name or bowed beneath their sway was too loosely bound together to exercise any definite pressure on the world without them. For a while indeed their anarchy seemed to undo all that their early victories had done. In the midst of the seventh century their power over Germany had all but gone. Though their hold remained unshaken in the central districts between the Neckar and the Main, Bavarians and Swabians had alike thrown off their rule to the south, while northwards the Saxons pushed forward from the Weser to the Rhine, and the Frisians won the lands round the mouth of the Scheldt. But it was just at this moment of weakness that the anarchy of the realm came suddenly to an end and the Frankish states drew together into a power which overawed the world. In 687 a victory at Testri placed the Eastern

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Franks of the Rhine and the Meuse at the head of their race, and the rule of their older royal house, the Merwings, was practically set aside for that of the leader of these Eastern Franks, Pippin of Herstall.

England and the Franks.

The victory of Pippin changed at a blow the political aspect of Western Christendom. Primarily it was a rally of the Frank race against pressure from without; and the mass of warring tribes had no sooner drawn together than the recovery of Lower Friesland showed their resolve to build up again the supremacy over Germany which the Franks had in great measure lost. But Testri was destined to have far wider issues than the mere restoration of the realm of Chlodowig. It was the victory of Pippin which drew England into connexion with the fortunes of the Franks. A friendly intercourse seems to have gone on between the two peoples ever since their settlement on either side of the Channel. There is little indeed to indicate the existence of any early political relations between them, but the bond of a common religion drew the two countries more closely together. Kings of East-Anglia took refuge among the Franks from the sword of Penda.[1] Frankish missionaries, such as Agilberct, made their way into Britain. English children were sent to be trained in Frank monasteries, and the daughters of Kentish kings

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 18.

became Frankish abbesses.[1] The passion for pilgrimages which arose at the close of the seventh century made English travellers familiar with the Frank kingdom as they passed through it on their way to Rome.[2] But it was not till the victory of Testri that the connexion of England and the Franks became in any way a political connexion. Victorious over the Frieslanders of the Scheldt, the Frankish leader was anxious to complete his victory by their conversion, and the zeal of Englishmen to win their kindred to the faith supplied him with missionaries. If Pippin did not summon the Northumbrian Willibrord and his twelve fellow preachers to his court in 690, he at any rate assured them when they appeared there of his support and protection in their mission work along the northern sea.[3]

The English Missionaries

Willibrord fixed his bishop's seat at Utrecht, and laboured for forty years among the stubborn Frieslanders, while the sword of Pippin and his son, Charles Martel, was slowly building up again the Empire of the Franks. But the work of Willibrord was eclipsed by that of the West-Saxon Winfrith or Boniface, who crossed to the Continent in the closing years of Ine's reign, or about 718.[4]

[1] Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 23; ibid. H. E. lib. ii. c. 20.

[2] Charles to Offa. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 496-497.

[3] Bæda, H. E. lib. v. c. 10.

[4] The work of Boniface lies too far outside English bounds to make a part of our story. But in European history his part is a great one. His English name was Winfrith; he was

Boniface, like his predecessor, looked for support to the Frankish kings. "Without your aid," he owned to Charles Martel, "I could neither control the people nor defend the priests nor prevent pagan and idolatrous rites in Germany." And the Frank aid was ungrudgingly given; it was the threats of Charles which shielded the missionary as he levelled the heathen temples to the ground and hewed down the oak of Thunder in the sacred grove by Fritzlar. In this strange alliance of the Gospel and the sword the sword necessarily played the weightier part. Had the Germans indeed been willing to listen to mere preaching, the preaching of the English missionaries was hardly

born in the last quarter of the seventh century at Crediton, and brought up in a monastery in or near Exeter. He became monk at Nutsell or Netley by Winchester, a priest at thirty, and so famous for learning that he was deputed by Ine to attend a council convoked by Archbishop Berhtwald. He sailed soon after 716, with two or three monks, to Utrecht, found the Frisian King Radbod at war with Charles Martel, and looking on missionary work there as hopeless, returned home again, and with letters from Bishop Daniel visited Gregory II. at Rome, where the Pope gave him a commission to evangelize Central Europe. He returned by Lombardy, and crossing the Alps into the Duchy of Bavaria, proceeded thence to Thuringia, a country half-heathen, half-converted by Scot missionaries. Here, however, in the midst of his labours of organization and discipline he heard of the death of Radbod (719); and he at once started for Friesland, where for three years he assisted Willibrord: then returning to Thuringia in the wake of Charles Martel's victorious troops, he conducted a mission among Hessian heathens between the Middle Rhine and the Elbe, till 723, when he again visited Rome and Gregory. He was now made "regionary bishop," assuming the name of Bonifacius, and was bound by a stringent oath of fealty to the Pope, Starting again with commendatory letters to Charles Martel. then in a fresh tide of conquests, he gained his support, and

such as to win them to the faith of Christ. A Frisian king who paused on the brink of baptism to ask whither his fathers had gone who had died unchristened was told that they had gone to hell. "Whither they have gone will I go!" said Radbod, and turned back from the font. But preaching in any shape was wasted on men who saw in the missionaries only an advance guard of the Frank invaders and in the Gospel a badge of national slavery. The old religious tolerance of the German peoples disappeared. The new faith advanced and drew back with the victories or defeats of the Franks. Here and there the German axe avenged

again attacked the Hessians and felled their sacred oak at Geismar. A constant correspondence with England drew to him monks, money, and books, in plenty; and in 731 a new Pope, Gregory III., made him Archbishop and "legate," so that he was enabled to correct refractory monks, and control chaos in Thuringia, as well as found missions and monasteries near Erfurt, Fritzlar, and Homburg in Hesse. In 738, with a great train of monks and converts, he visited Rome for the last time: returned through Bavaria, and organized the Church there by founding four sees in that Duchy. Still backed by Charles Martel's sons, especially Pippin, he wielded authority over Austrasia and Neustria, and rose into the greatest Church figure of the day. In 743 he became Archbishop of Mainz, with a diocese stretching from Cöln to Strassburg, and from Worms to Coire; and showed his activity by founding sees at Würzburg, Erfurt, Eichstadt, and in Hesse at Buraburg, while in 744 he founded the abbey of Fulda in the great forest between Hesse and Bavaria. In 751 Pippin was made king through his means, but Boniface, from his letters, seems not to have been present at the coronation. He was in fact withdrawing from active life; in 753 he named Lull his successor at Mainz; and now, "infirm and decrepit in body," set out for Frisia, and was martyred there June 4. For his life, besides the passages in Bæda, we have a biography by Willibrord, and his collected letters.

the wrongs of German freedom as of the German gods, and at the moment when his own Wessex was finally shaking off the Mercian supremacy, Boniface himself fell beneath the sword of heathen Frieslanders. By this time, however, the work of the missionaries was done. From the banks of the Danube to the mouth of the Rhine all Germany, save the stubborn Saxon land, bowed, if but in name, to the faith of Christ.

Results of their work.

But the conversion of Germany by the English missionaries was more than a victory for the Franks or for Christianity: it was a victory for Rome. England owed its faith to the Papacy, and it was to Rome that its missionaries looked as the religious centre of Christendom. If they drew their temporal power from the Frankish sword, they sought spiritual authority from the hands of the Roman Bishop. It was to Rome that Willibrord wandered for ordination as Bishop of the Frieslanders; it was from Rome that Boniface sought his commission to preach in Central and Southern Germany. In visit after visit to the shrine of the Apostles the missionaries bound the German Church firmly to the obedience of the see of St. Peter. Their action was a turning-point in the history of the Papacy; for it was to the immense accession of power which their work gave it that the spiritual monarchy of Rome over the West was mainly due. But it was a turning-point also in the history of the Franks. The

submission to her spiritual sway of the peoples whom their sword had won first brought Rome and the Franks together, and the union of the two powers was soon drawn closer by mutual needs. Rome saw in the Franks the one state which could save her from the ambition of the Lombards and the pressure of the Eastern Emperor. The house of Pippin on the other hand saw in Rome the one source of religious authority which could give a sacred sanction to their rule; and in the years that followed Ine's withdrawal from the throne the alliance between the Franks and the Papacy took a formal shape. In 751 the voice of Rome pronounced that the honours of sovereignty over the Frankish peoples should fall to the actual holder of power. The Merwing Hilderick was formally deposed, and Pippin the Short, the son of Charles Martel, was anointed King of the Franks with the assent of Boniface as legate of the Papal see. A few years later, Pippin repaid his debt to Rome by crossing the Alps and by delivering the Papacy from the pressure of the Lombards.

Mercia under Offa.

In bringing about this union between Rome and the Franks the English missionaries had given their after-shape to the fortunes of modern Europe. The greatness of the Papacy in the middle ages sprang from the recognition of its authority by the German Church which Boniface and Willibrord built up. In saving Rome from the Lombards Pippin and his son Charles the Great

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brought about a revival of the Empire in the west. A common interest begat at a single moment the two mighty powers which were to part mediæval Christendom between them, and from whose strife were to spring the faiths and the nations of modern Europe. As yet, however, these mighty issues were unseen; and England knew only of the connexion between Pippin and the English preachers in the intercourse between Britain and the Frankish Court which this connexion brought about. Its fortunes indeed at this moment offered a strange contrast to those of the country across the Channel. While the Franks were drawing together into a vast and concentrated power, the work of national consolidation among the English seemed to be fatally arrested. The battle of Burford had finally settled the division of Britain into three equal powers. Wessex was now as firmly planted south of the Thames as Northumbria north of the Humber; and the Midland kingdom could henceforth hope for no extension beyond either of these rivers. At the moment indeed of its great defeat it could hardly hope to retain its supremacy even over this territory. Not only had Wessex been freed by the battle of Burford, but Æthelbald's own throne seems to have been shaken; for in 757 the Mercian king was surprised and slain in a night attack by his ealdormen,[1] and a year of confusion passed ere

[1] Appendix Bædæ, a. 757.

his kinsman Offa could avenge him on his murderers and succeed to the realm. But in the anarchy Mercia had shrunk into narrower bounds. Kent, Essex, and East-Anglia had thrown off her yoke, while the Welshmen were rallying to fresh inroads over her western border.

Wars with Kent and Wessex.

None of the Mercian losses had been so grievous as the loss of Kent. Through Kent ran the mainroad of communication with the Continent; it was from the ports of Kent that English merchants set sail across the Channel: and the Kentish port-dues formed a welcome addition to the Mercian revenue. Kent, too, was the seat of an archbishoprick whose obedience was owned by the whole English Church south of the Humber, and whose political weight was making itself more strongly felt every day. Yet years had to pass before Offa could set about the recovery of this province, and it was only after a struggle of three years that a victory at Otford[1] in 775 gave it back to the Mercian realm. With Kent the king doubtless again recovered Essex and London, within whose walls, in a quarter which was doubtless then still uninhabited, he built according to the tradition of the city a royal villa whose site is now marked by a church of St. Alban's. The re-conquest of these dependencies in the south-east may have spurred Offa to a fresh encounter with the West-Saxons, and four

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 773 (5).

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years later, in 779, he marched upon the fragment of their kingdom which remained to the north of the Thames, the district of the Four Towns, and of the modern shires of Oxford and Buckingham. The two armies met in a hard-fought encounter at Bensington,[1] and the capture of the town as well as the eventual possession of the disputed district show that the victory remained with Offa.

Conquests over the Welsh.

The success was a great one, for, as the locality of their battles shows, it was this district above all that had formed the subject of contention between Mercia and the West-Saxons; while its conquest gave the Midland kingdom a strong southern frontier in the course of the Thames. But how balanced was the struggle is clear from the fact that it brought Offa's efforts to build up again the supremacy of his predecessor to an end, and that for the nine years that followed Mercia made no further efforts to extend her power over her English neighbours. Like her rivals, she turned upon the Welsh.[2] Pushing after 779 over the Severn, whose upper course had served till now as the border-line between Briton and Englishman, Offa drove the king of Powys from his capital, Pengwyrn, whose older name its

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 777 (9).

[2] "Annales Cambriæ" (Rolls edit.), a. 778-784. The story of the dyke is not found before Asser (Asser, ed. Wise, p. 10); and the dyke itself is certainly in parts a natural feature and not artificial. But the later tradition is probably right in taking it as a bound of their conquest.

conquerors replaced by the significant designation of the Town in the Scrub, Scrobsbyryg, or Shrewsbury, and carried the Mercian border to the Wye. The border-line he drew after his inroad is marked by a huge earth-work which runs from the mouth of the Wye to that of the Dee, and which still bears the name of Offa's Dyke. A settlement of Englishmen on the land between this dyke and the Severn served as a military frontier for the Mercian realm. Here, as in the later conquests of the Northumbrians and the West-Saxons, the older plan of clearing the conquered from the soil was abandoned. The Welshmen no longer withdrew from the land which the English won; they dwelt undisturbed among their conquerors; and it was probably to regulate the relations of the two races on the border he had won that Offa drew up the code which bore his name.[1]

Mercia and Wessex.

In the central, as in the northern realm, attacks on the Britons marked the close of all dreams of supremacy over the English themselves. Under Offa Mercia sank into virtual isolation. As we shall see, he cherished to the very close of his life the hope of restoring in its fulness the older realm of Central Britain by the recovery of East-Anglia; but he abstained from any effort to extend his supremacy over the two rival kingdoms.

[1] The code is lost, but is mentioned by Ælfred in his Laws. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws and Institut." vol. i. p. 59.

The anarchy into which Northumbria sank after Eadberht's death never tempted him to cross the Humber; nor was he shaken from his inaction by as tempting an opportunity which presented itself across the Thames. Their new strength had not drawn the West-Saxons from their attitude of isolation; though they were ready to defend their independence against Mercian attack, their aggressive force, like that of Offa or Northumbria, was turned not against their fellow-Englishmen, but against the Welsh. It must have been during the years which followed on the battle of Burford that they made themselves masters of that part of what remained of the shrunken kingdom of Dyvnaint which still retains its old name in the form of Devon, and pushed their frontier from the Exe and the Tone, where Ine had left it, as far westward as the Tamar. But in 786 their progress was stayed by a fresh outbreak of anarchy. Their king Cynewulf was slain by the brother of a king whom he had himself driven from the throne,[1] and the succession of his son Beorhtric was disputed by Ecgberht, a descendant like Ine of Ceawlin, and thus a representative of the rival line of the house of Cerdic. The strife ended in Ecgberht's defeat and in his flight to Offa's court; but the Mercian king used his presence not so much to further schemes of aggrandizement as to bring about a

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 784 (6).

peaceful connexion with his turbulent neighbours, and three years later Beorhtric purchased Ecgberht's expulsion from Mercia by taking Offa's daughter, Eadburh, to wife.[1]

Archbishoprick of Lichfield.

At this moment indeed Offa was bent on a project which pointed to the purpose of making the threefold division of Britain a permanent basis of its political order. This was the erection of a third archbishoprick. Theodore's design of gathering into one the whole English Church round the centre of Canterbury had already in part broken down; for when Northumbria abandoned the hope of a national supremacy and withdrew into provincial isolation, she raised the see of York into a new archbishoprick. Offa now followed its example. The mission of two Papal legates to Britain in 786[2] was the result of urgent letters from the king; and in a synod held under their presidency in the following year Lichfield was raised into an archbishoprick with the bishops of Mercia and East-Anglia for its suffragans.[3] After-tradition was probably right in looking on this measure as intended mainly to lessen the power of Canterbury, where the primates were becoming a centre of Kentish resistance to the Mercian overlordship. Left with only four suf-

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 787 (9).

[2] Sim. Dunelm. de Gest. Reg. a. 786.

[3] Eng. Chron. a. 785 (really 787). Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," etc., vol. iii. 443 *et seq.*, for documents of this mission, and valuable notes.

fragans, the Bishops of Rochester and London, of Selsey and Winchester,[1] the see of Augustine must have sunk into the weakest and least important of the three primacies between which Britain was now divided. But both ecclesiastically and politically Offa's act pointed to far wider issues than this. It brought England into new and more direct relations with Rome. Roman legates were called to remould the fabric of the English Church, and the Papal sanction was met by a pledge on Offa's part that he and his successors would pay year by year a sum both for alms and lights to the see of St. Peter. Its political results promised to be even weightier. Had this threefold division remained stamped on the English Church, it would hardly have failed to strengthen the threefold division which seemed to be stamping itself on the English nation. The effect of its separate primacy in strengthening the isolation of the north was seen at a later day in the difficulty with which this part of England was brought into political union with the rest, whether by the sword of Eadred or of William the Norman. Had the Archbishoprick of Lichfield proved a more lasting one, it could hardly have been less effective in strengthening the isolation of Mid-Britain, and in throwing a fresh hindrance in the way of any fusion of Englishmen into a single people.

All Offa in fact aimed at was the union of

[1] Malm. Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 87.

Mid-Britain, of the land between Humber and Thames, with its Kentish outlet, under the Mercian crown; and even in this aim he was still foiled by the resistance of East-Anglia. Not only was he hampered in any larger projects of aggrandizement by the dread of the West-Saxons, but he was forced to watch jealously a power which had risen to a dangerous greatness over sea. The results of the action of Boniface and his fellow missionaries had been rapidly developing themselves through the reign of Offa, and the power of the Franks had now risen to a height which made them supreme in the Western world. After a short interval of divided sovereignty on the death of Pippin, his son Charles, so well known in after days as Charles the Great, won full possession of the Frankish throne. The policy of Charles towards the English kingdoms remained as friendly as that of his father. The political incidents of the new reign indeed made English friendship more needful than ever to the Franks, for the two peoples whose hostility threatened them with immediate war were both linked in different ways to Englishmen. In their German home the Lombards had been close neighbours of the conquerors of Britain, and the similarity of their dress, the identity of many of the Lombard and English names, as well as chance marriages of Lombard kings with Englishwomen, point to closer bonds between the peoples than

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those of mere neighbourhood. Nor had Englishmen forgotten that the Saxons of the Continent, with whom Charles was now about to open the most terrible contest of his reign, were the stock from which they sprang, though their zeal for the Christianization of their kindred was strong enough to overpower the more natural sympathy with them in their struggle for freedom against the sword of the Frank. But this common religious interest on the Saxon Shore was not the only bond which drew Frank and Englishman together. A common political interest revealed itself in their relations with the Celtic peoples on either side the Channel. Among the most harassing troubles of the Franks was the restless craving of the Bretons for freedom; and the struggle of the Bretons against the Franks found echoes in the struggle of their Welsh brethren in Britain against the English kingdoms. Offa was bridling the inroads of the central Welshmen, Wessex was slowly pressing westward on those of Dyvnaint, at the moment when the bravest of the Frank warriors found endless work in stamping out again and again the unquenchable fire of revolt among the Celts of Britanny.

Charles and Offa.

The scanty details which we possess of intercourse between Charles and the English kingdoms point to a policy which would naturally be dictated by these common interests. His friendship with the Northumbrian scholar, Alcuin, who joined

him in 782, naturally drew Charles into close relations with Northern Britain; but his missions and remonstrances in this quarter seem at first to have aimed simply at checking the anarchy of Northumbria. With Offa—if we judge from the fragments of their correspondence which remain, rather than from later traditions—the relations of Charles were equally friendly.[1] He may have striven to save Kent from his grasp, and threatening letters from the Frankish court may have met the Mercian on his march into the province.[2] But if so, Offa's disregard of them was followed by no act of more direct intervention. At the moment, indeed, of the reconquest of Kent the hands of Charles were tied by dangers nearer home. It was no time to provide a quarrel in his rear when he was marching to his final struggle with the Lombards, and threatened with the opening of a struggle far sterner and more lasting with the Saxons of the Elbe. In the years which followed, indeed, the power of the Frankish king reached a height which made any hostility from England of less moment to him. While Offa was mastering Kent, Charles put an end to the monarchy of the Lombards, and added the bulk

[1] In a letter written in 796, or at the close of Offa's life, Charles speaks of their "antiqui inter nos pacti," as well as of the constant correspondence between them, "epistolis, quæ diversis siquidem temporibus per missorum vestrorum manus delatæ sunt." Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 496.

[2] This is only mentioned by the supposititious "Vita Offæ."

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of Italy to the Frankish realm. While the Mercian king drove the Welsh from the Severn, Charles was driving the Saxons in thousands to baptism in the Lippe, and carrying his border over the Pyrenees to the Ebro. At the moment when Ecgberht made his way to the Frankish court, its king had become master of a realm which stretched from Britanny to the mountains of Bohemia, and from Zaragoza to the mouth of the Elbe. But immense as was his power, Charles was still careful to keep up good relations with the English kingdom, and the care with which at this time he informed Offa of the progress of Christianity among the Old Saxons proves that he looked upon him as a useful ally.

Relations of Charles with England.

But friendly as was the general tenor of the King's policy, Offa shrank cautiously from any connexion which might imply a recognition of Frankish supremacy. When Charles in 788 demanded the hand of one of the Mercian king's daughters for his son Charles, Offa demanded in return the hand of a daughter of Charles for his son Ecgberht; and so stung was Charles by this claim of equality that he closed for a while his ports against English traffic till the mediation of Alcuin reconciled the two sovereigns.[1] But Offa had good grounds for his caution. The costly gifts which Charles despatched from time to time

[1] See an examination of this story in Lappenberg, Ang. Sax. i. 293.

to the monasteries of England as of Ireland showed his will to obtain an influence in both countries: through Alcuin he maintained relations with Northumbria: through Archbishop Æthelheard he maintained relations not only with Kent but with the whole English Church. Above all he harboured at his court exiles from every English realm. Exiled kings of Northumbria made their way to Aachen or Nimeguen; East-Anglian thegns sought a refuge there after the conquest of their realm;[1] and at the close of Offa's life in 796 Charles was still sheltering a priest, Odberht, who had left England on pretext of pilgrimage, but, as the Mercian king believed, to make false charges against him, as well as other exiles, "who through fear of death have fled to our protection."[2] There too Ecgberht, the claimant of the West-Saxon throne, had found a refuge since Offa's league with Beorhtric in 787.

Ecgberht at the Frankish Court.

The years which Ecgberht spent at the court of Charles were years of the highest moment in the history of the world. Master of the whole German people across the Channel, the Frankish king threw the weight of his new power on the Sclavonic and Tartar nations which were pressing on its rear; and that eastward movement of the Teutonic race, which was to found the two great German

[1] Charles to Archbishop Æthelheard. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 487, with note.

[2] Charles to Offa. Stubbs and Haddan, iii. 497.

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powers of the present day in the marches of Brandenburg and Austria, began in the campaigns of Charles against the Avars and the Wends. But Charles was now to be more than a German king. His greatness had reached a height which revived in men's minds the memory of Rome: his repulse of the heathen world, which was pressing on from the east, marked him out for the head and champion of Christendom; and on Christmas Day, 800, the shouts of the people and priesthood of Rome hailed him as Roman Emperor. Ecgberht had probably marched in the train of the Frankish king to the Danube and the Tiber; he may have witnessed the great event which changed the face of the world; and it was in the midst of the peace which followed it, while the new Emperor was yet nursing hopes of a recognition in the East as in the West, which would have united the whole world again under a Roman rule, that the death of Beorhtric opened a way for the exile's return to Wessex.

Britain and the Empire.

The years that had passed since his flight had made little change in the state of Britain. In 794 Offa had at last been enabled to complete his realm in Mid-Britain by the murder of the East-Anglian king, Æthelberht, and the seizure of his land;[1] but from that moment to his death in 796 he was occupied in the founding of what was destined to be one of the greatest of English

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 792 (4).

Walker & Boutall del. et sc.

abbeys on a spot hallowed by the death of St. Alban near the ruins of the Roman Verulamium, and in dealing with a fresh Kentish revolt. The revolt was only quelled by his successor, Cenwulf.[1] Cenwulf secured the co-operation of the Kentish Primate in this work by a pledge to suppress the Mercian Archbishoprick; and in 803 Lichfield sank again into a suffragan see to the successors of Augustine.[2] But there was still no attempt to carry further the supremacy of Mercia. The history, indeed, of the Midland kingdom is at this point little more than a blank. All dreams of ambition at home must in fact have been hushed in the sense of a common danger, as men followed step by step the progress of the new ruler of Western Christendom. Charles had remained to the last on terms of peace and friendship with Offa;[3] but the death of the Mercian king, the war of Mercia with Kent, and the murder of King Æthelred by the Northumbrian thegns, afforded in 796 an opening for intervention, which seems only to have been averted by the persuasion of Alcuin.[4] The danger, though staved off for the

[1] In 798. Eng. Chron. a. 796.

[2] For letters of Cenwulf and Leo III. on this matter see Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," 521, 523. For final act of the council which did away with the archbishoprick, ibid. p. 542.

[3] Letters of Charles and Alcuin to Offa in 796. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 496, 498.

[4] On the news of the murder "Carolus . . . in tantum iratus est contra gentem illam, ut ait, perfidam et perversam, et homicidam dominorum suorum, pejorem eam paganis existimat; ut, nisi ego intercessor essem pro eâ, quicquid eis boni abstrahere

time, must have deepened to English minds when four years later Charles mounted the Imperial throne. His coronation as Emperor had a meaning for the English states which we are apt to forget. Britain had been lost to the Empire in the hour when the rest of the Western provinces were lost; and to men of that day it would seem natural enough that she should return to the Empire now that Rome had risen again to more than its old greatness in the West. Such a return, we can hardly doubt, was in the mind of Charles; and the revolutions which were distracting the English kingdoms told steadily towards it. When in 802[1] Ecgberht left the court of Charles and mounted the West-Saxon throne, Cenwulf stood silently by: and the peace which he maintained with the new ruler of Wessex throughout his reign suggests that this restoration had been brought about by diplomatic arrangement between the Emperor and the Mercian king.[2] Six years later a new step forward in the assertion of this supremacy was made by the new Empire. In 808[3] the Northumbrian king, Eardwulf, who had two years

potuisset et mali machinari, jam fecisset." Alcuin to Offa, between April and July 796. Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 498.

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 800.

[2] It is possible that Cenwulf may have been hampered by a strife with Eardwulf of Northumbria about harbouring of exiles, which Simeon of Durham places in 801. Sim. Durh. Gest. Reg. a. 801.

[3] Sim. Durh. Hist. Dun. Ecc. ii. 5; Eng. Chron. (Peterborough) a. 806.

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before been driven from his throne by a revolt of his subjects, appealed both to Pope and Emperor, and was brought back and restored to his throne by their envoys.[1]

Conquest of Cornwall.

But though we are thus told of the assertion of the Imperial supremacy in Northern Britain, of the relations between Charles and the exile who had quitted his protection to become king of the West-Saxons we know nothing. The stay of Ecgberht at the Frankish court had left, as his after policy shows, a marked impression on him, and we may believe that the friendship which we find existing in later days between the West-Saxon house and that of Charles the Great had already begun. The first political enterprise of the new king at any rate was one which Charles himself might have suggested. The Bretons of Britanny were among the standing troubles of the Frankish realm, as the Britons of West-Wales were the standing trouble of the West-Saxon. A blow at the one was in great measure a blow at the other; and Lewis the Gentle, who in 814 succeeded his father Charles on the Imperial throne, must have looked on with approval as strife between the sprinkling of Englishmen who had

[1] Eginhard. Annal. a. 808. "Rex Nordanhumbrorum de Brittaniâ insulâ, nomine Eardulf, regno et patria pulsus, ad Imperatorem dum adhuc Noviomagi moraretur venit, et patefacto adventus sui negotio, Romam proficiscitur, Romaque rediens per legatos Romani Pontificis et domini Imperatoris in regnum suum reducitur." See Letters of Leo III. in Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 562–565.

recently settled in Devon and the Welsh who still held their ground across the Tamar grew into a war which in 815 forced Ecgberht to march into the heart of Cornwall.[1] After eight years of fighting his attack proved successful; the last fragment of British dominion in the west came to an end; and the whole of Dyvnaint owned the supremacy of the West-Saxon king. The conquest of Cornwall marks a fresh stage in the long warfare between Briton and Englishman. As a nation Britain had passed away with the victories of Deorham and Chester: what was left were four British peoples, the Britons of Cornwall, of Central Wales, of Cumbria, and of Strath-Clyde. In the two hundred years which had elapsed since Æthelfrith's victory, three of these had bowed to the English sway. Ecgfrith had put an end to the independence of Cumbria. Under Eadberht Northumbria had brought her strife with Strath-Clyde to a close by the subjection of these northern Britons and the capture of Alcluyd. In Central Wales Offa's conquest of the tract between the Severn and the Dyke had been followed by a payment of tribute on the part of the chieftains to the westward of it, which was a practical acknowledgment of their submission to the Mercian crown. Ecgberht's campaign brought the long struggle to an end by the reduction of the one British state which still remained unconquered;

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 813, 823.


British Names.....Damnonii
Roman Names.....AQUAE SULIS
English Names.....Bathanceaster
Modern Names.....Bath
MONMOUTH
CLAMORGAN
ISCA SILURUM
Caerlon
VENTA SILURUM
GLOUCESTER
Mouth of the Severn
Bristol
R. Avon
R. Frome
AQUAE SULIS
Bathanceaster
Bath
Mendip Hills
Watchet
Exmoor
Somerset
Glastonbury
Taunton
R. Tone
R. Parrett
R. Axe
R. Exe
Wellington
SCHALIS
Ilchester
Sherborne
Durotriges
Dorsaetan
Defnasaetan
ISCA DAMNONIORUM
Exeter
DUNOVARIA
Dorchester
Wareham
Poole
Ringwood
Badbury
Badbury
Mt. Badon
Cranborne Chase
Cerdigesford
Charford
Salisbury
Wilton
Mere
Ellandun
Isenbridge
Amesbury
Stonehenge
Hanging Stones
Plain
Andover
Deorham
Chippenham
Malmesbury
Marlborough
Wanborough
Braden Forest
Bryanburh
Ridgbury Hill
Hungerford
Savernake Forest
VEPIETO
Salisbury
CUNETIO
Marlborough
Forest
Selwood Forest
Frome
Maidulfsburh
Smith's Hill
Solent
VECTIS, Wiht
I. of Wight
Swanage
SOUTH WEST BRITAIN.
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
Walker & Boutall sc.

and the Britons of the south-western peninsula, after the successive losses of Somerset and Devon, saw the West-Saxons masters of their last strongholds from the Tamar to the Land's End.

Conquest of Mercia.

But the winning of West-Wales was the smallest result of Ecgberht's victories. The dread of Welsh hostility in their rear had formed till now the main check on any advance of the West-Saxons against their English neighbours; and not only was this check removed by the reduction of Cornwall, but it was removed at a moment when its internal condition allowed Wessex to take advantage of the liberty of action which it had gained, and when the civil discord which had so long torn the kingdom in pieces was hushed beneath the firm rule of Ecgberht. While Wessex too regained the strength it had lost through the past two centuries, its rival in Central Britain sank helplessly into the anarchy from which the southern kingdom had emerged. On Cenwulf's death[1] in 821 Mercia was torn with civil war; and the weakness this left behind it was seen when his successor took up the long interrupted strife with the West-Saxons. The war in Dyvnaint was hardly over when Beornwulf in 825 marched into Wiltshire. But the decisive repulse of his army at Ellandun[2] was the signal for a break up of the Mercian realm. All England south of the Thames

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 819.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 823.

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submitted to the West-Saxon king;[1] the East-Saxons over the river owned the rule of Wessex; and in Kent Ecgberht was able to set aside a native king who had seized its throne in the hour of Mercia's defeat. Others were doing his work in Mid-Britain itself. The overthrow of Ellandun was followed by a desperate rising against Beornwulf's sway along the eastern coast. Mercia, spent by its earlier overthrow, was utterly exhausted by two victories of the East-Anglians; two of its kings in succession fell fighting on East-Anglian soil;[2] and a third, Wiglaf, had hardly mounted the throne when Ecgberht saw that the hour had come for a decisive onset. In 828 the West-Saxon army crossed the Thames; Wiglaf fled helplessly before it; and the realm of Penda and of Offa bowed without a struggle to its conqueror.

Submission of Northumbria.

But Ecgberht had wider dreams of conquest than those of supremacy over Mercia alone; and setting an under-king on its throne, he marched in the following year to the attack of Northumbria. In the silence of her annals we know not why the realm which seventy years before had beaten back Æthelbald, and which had since carried its conquests to the Clyde, now yielded without a blow to Ecgberht's summons. The weariness of half a century of anarchy had no doubt done much to break the spirit of northern independence, while terror of the pirates who were harrying the

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 823.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 823, 825.

Northumbrian coast may have strengthened the dim longing for internal unity which was growing up under the influence of the Church. But whatever may have been the causes of their action, the Northumbrian thegns met Ecgberht on their border, at Dore, in Derbyshire, and owned him as their over-lord.[1] There is something startling in so quiet and uneventful a close to the struggles of two hundred years. For with the submission of Northumbria the work that Oswiu and Æthelbald had failed to do was done. In a revolution which seemed sudden, but which was in reality the inevitable close of the growth of national consciousness through these centuries of English history, the old severance of people from people had at last been broken down; and the whole English race in Britain was for the first time knit together under a single ruler. Though the legend which made Ecgberht take the title of King of England is an invention of later times, it expressed an historic truth. Long and bitter as the struggle for separate existence was still to be in Mid-Britain and the North, it was a struggle that never wholly undid the work which his sword had done; and from the moment when the Northumbrian thegns bowed to their West-Saxon over-lord, England was made in fact if not as yet in name.

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 827.

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