THE HISTORY
OF THE
KINGS OF ENGLAND.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

Of the arrival of the Angles, and of the Kings of Kent. [A.D. 449.]

In the year of the incarnation of our Lord 449, Angles and Saxons first came into Britain; and although the cause of their arrival is universally known, it may not be improper here to subjoin it: and, that the design of my work may be the more manifest, to begin even from an earlier period. That Britain, compelled by Julius Cæsar to submit to the Roman power, was held in high estimation by that people, may be collected from their history, and be seen also in the ruins of their ancient buildings. Even their emperors, sovereigns of almost all the world, eagerly embraced opportunities of sailing hither, and of spending their days here. Finally, Severus and Constantius, two of their greatest princes, died upon the island, and were there interred with the utmost pomp. The former, to defend this province from the incursions of the barbarians, built his celebrated and well-known wall from sea to sea. The latter, a man, as they report, of courteous manners, left Constantine, his son by Helena, a tender of cattle,* a youth of great promise, his

* Helena’s origin has been much contested: Gibbon decides that she was daughter of an innkeeper. The word “Stabularia,” literally implies an ostler-wench; and it has been conjectured that it was applied to her, by the Jews and Gentiles, on account of her building a church on the spot where stood the stable in which our Lord was born.
heir. Constantine, greeted emperor by the army, led away, in an expedition destined to the continent, a numerous force of British soldiers; by whose exertions, the war succeeding to his wishes, he gained in a short time the summit of power. For these veterans, when their toil was over, he founded a colony on the western coast of Gaul, where, to this day, their descendants, somewhat degenerate in language and manners from our own Britons, remain with wonderful increase.*

In succeeding times, in this island, Maximus, a man well-fitted for command, had he not aspired to power in defiance of his oath, assumed the purple, as though compelled by the army, and preparing immediately to pass over into Gaul, he despoiled the province of almost all its military force. Not long after also, one Constantine, who had been elected emperor on account of his name, drained its whole remaining warlike strength; but both being slain, the one by Theodosius, the other by Honorius, they became examples of the instability of human greatness. Of the forces which had followed them, part shared the fate of their leaders; the rest, after their defeat, fled to the continental Britons. Thus when the tyrants had left none but half-savages in the country, and, in the towns, those only who were given up to luxury, Britain, despoiled of the support of its youthful population, and bereft of every useful art, was for a long time exposed to the ambition of neighbouring nations.

For immediately, by an excursus of the Scots and Picts, numbers of the people were slain, villages burnt, towns destroyed, and everything laid waste by fire and sword. Part of the harassed islanders, who thought anything more advisable than contending in battle, fled for safety to the mountains; others, burying their treasures in the earth, many of which are dug up in our own times, proceeded to Rome to ask assistance. The Romans, touched with pity, and deeming it above all things important to yield succour to their oppressed allies, twice lent their aid, and defeated the enemy. But at length, wearied with the distant voyage, they declined returning in future; bidding them rather themselves not

* Various periods have been assigned for the British settlement in Armorica, or Bretagne; but the subject is still involved in great obscurity.
† Some MSS. read juvenils, others militaris.
‡ Some MSS. read successae.
degenerate from the martial energy of their ancestors, but
learn to defend their country with spirit, and with arms.
They accompanied their advice with the plan of a wall, to be
built for their defence; the mode of keeping watch on the
ramparts; of sallying out against the enemy, should it be
necessary, together with other duties of military discipline.
After giving these admonitions, they departed, accompanied
by the tears of the miserable inhabitants; and Fortune,
smiling on their departure, restored them to their friends and
country. The Scots, learning the improbability of their re-
turn, immediately began to make fresh and more frequent
irruptions against the Britons; to level their wall, to kill the
few opponents they met with, and to carry off considerable
booty; while such as escaped fled to the royal residence,
imploking the protection of their sovereign.

At this time Vortigern was King of Britain; a man cal-
culated neither for the field nor the council, but wholly given
up to the lusts of the flesh, the slave of every vice: a cha-
acter of insatiable avarice, ungovernable pride, and polluted
by his lusts. To complete the picture, as we read in the
History of the Britons, he had defiled his own daughter, who
was lured to the participation of such a crime by the hope of
sharing his kingdom, and she had borne him a son. Regard-
less of his treasuries at this dreadful juncture, and wasting
the resources of the kingdom in riotous living, he was awake
only to the blandishments of abandoned women. Roused at
length, however, by the clamours of the people, he summoned
a council, to take the sense of his nobility on the state of
public affairs. To be brief, it was unanimously resolved to
invite over from Germany the Angles and Saxons, nations
powerful in arms, but of a roving life. It was conceived
that this would be a double advantage: for it was thought
that, by their skill in war, these people would easily subdue
their enemies; and, as they hitherto had no certain habita-
tion, would gladly accept even an unproductive soil, provided
it afforded them a stationary residence. Moreover, that they
could not be suspected of ever entertaining a design against
the country, since the remembrance of this kindness would
soften their native ferocity. This counsel was adopted, and
ambassadors, men of rank, and worthy to represent the
country, were sent into Germany.
The Germans, hearing that voluntarily offered, which they had long anxiously desired, readily obeyed the invitation; their joy quickening their haste. Bidding adieu, therefore, to their native fields and the ties of kindred, they spread their sails to Fortune, and, with a favouring breeze, arrived in Britain in three of those long vessels which they call "ceols." At this and other times came over a mixed multitude from three of the German nations; that is to say, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. For almost all the country lying to the north of the British ocean, though divided into many provinces, is justly denominat ed Germany, from its germinating so many men. And as the pruner cuts off the more luxuriant branches of the tree to impart a livelier vigour to the remainder, so the inhabitants of this country assist their common parent by the expulsion of a part of their members, lest she should perish by giving sustenance to too numerous an offspring; but in order to obviate discontent, they cast lots who shall be compelled to migrate. Hence the men of this country have made a virtue of necessity, and, when driven from their native soil, they have gained foreign settlements by force of arms. The Vandals, for instance, who formerly over-ran Africa; the Goths, who made themselves masters of Spain; the Lombards, who, even at the present time, are settled in Italy; and the Normans, who have given their own name to that part of Gaul which they subdued. From Germany, then, there first came into Britain, an inconsiderable number indeed, but well able to make up for their paucity by their courage. These were under the conduct of Hengist and Horsa, two brothers of suitable disposition, and of noble race in their own country. They were great-grandsons of the celebrated Woden, from whom almost all the royal families of these barbarous nations deduce their origin; and to whom the nations of the Angles, fondly deifying him, have consecrated by immemorial superstition the fourth day of the week, as they have the sixth to his wife Frea. Bede has related in what particular parts of

* These are supposed to be long vessels, somewhat like galleys, and it would appear, as well from Brompton, col. 897, as from so small a number containing a body equal to a military enterprise like that described here and in other places, that they were of considerable burden.
Britain, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes,* fixed their habitations: my design, however, is not to dilate, though there may be abundance of materials for the purpose, but to touch only on what is necessary.

The Angles were eagerly met on all sides upon their arrival: from the king they received thanks, from the people expressions of good-will. Faith was plighted on either side, and the Isle of Thanet appropriated for their residence. It was agreed, moreover, that they should exert their prowess in arms for the service of the country; and, in return, receive a suitable reward from the people for whose safety they underwent such painful labours. Ere long, the Scots advanced, as usual, secure, as they supposed, of a great booty with very little difficulty. However, the Angles assailed them, and scarcely had they engaged, before they were put to flight, whilst the cavalry pursued and destroyed the fugitives. Contests of this kind were frequent, and victory constantly siding with the Angles, as is customary in human affairs, while success inflamed the courage of one party, and dread increased the cowardice of the other, the Scots in the end avoided nothing so cautiously as an engagement with them.

In the meantime, Hengist, not less keen in perception than ardent in the field, with consent of Vortigern, sends back some of his followers to his own country, with the secret purpose, however, of representing the indolence of the king and people, the opulence of the island, and the prospect of advantage to new adventurers. Having executed their commission adroitly, in a short time they return with sixteen ships, bringing with them the daughter of Hengist; a maiden, as we have heard, who might justly be called the master-piece of nature and the admiration of mankind. At an entertainment, provided for them on their return, Hengist commanded his daughter to assume the office of cup-bearer, that she might gratify the eyes of the king as he sat at table. Nor was the design unsuccessful: for he, ever eager after female beauty, deeply smitten with the graceful-

* Bede i. 15. The people of Kent and of the Isle of Wight were Jutes; the East, South, and West Saxons, were Saxons; and of the Angles came, the East-Angles, Mid-Angles, Mercians, and Northumbrians. For the limits of the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy, see Chap. VI. The Cottonian MS. (Claud. ix.) reads, Wichtis.
ness of her form and the elegance of her motion, instantly conceived a vehement desire for the possession of her person, and immediately proposed marriage to her father; urging him to a measure to which he was already well inclined. Hengist, at first, kept up the artifice by a refusal; stating, that so humble a connection was unworthy of a king: but, at last, appearing to consent with reluctance, he gave way to his importunities, and accepted, as a reward, the whole of Kent, where all justice had long since declined under the administration of its Gourong (or Viceroy), who, like the other princes of the island, was subject to the monarchy of Vortigern. Not satisfied with this liberality, but abusing the imprudence of the king, the barbarian persuaded him to send for his son and brother, men of warlike talents, from Germany, pretensing, that he would defend the province on the east, while they might curb the Scots on the northern frontier. The king assenting, they sailed round Britain, and arriving at the Orkney Isles, the inhabitants of which they involved in the same calamity with the Picts and Scots, at this and after times, they finally settled in the northern part of the island, now called Northumbria. Still no one there assumed the royal title or insignia till the time of Ida, from whom sprang the regal line of the Northumbrians; but of this hereafter. We will now return to the present subject.

Vortimer, the son of Vortigern, thinking it unnecessary longer to dissemble that he saw himself and his Britons circumvented by the craft of the Angles, turned his thoughts to their expulsion, and stimulated his father to the same attempt. At his suggestion, the truce was broken seven years after their arrival; and during the ensuing twenty, they frequently fought partial battles,* and, as the chronicle relates, four general actions. From the first conflict they parted on equal terms: one party lamenting the loss of Horsa, the brother of Hengist; the other, that of Katigis, another of Vortigern's sons. The Angles, having the advantage in all the succeeding encounters, peace was concluded; Vortimer, who had been the instigator of the war,

* At Aylesford, A.D. 455; at Crayford, 457; at Wippedesfleete (supposed, but very doubtful, Ebbsfleete, in Thanet), 465; and the fourth, A.D. 473, the place not mentioned. See Saxon Chronicle, A.D. 465.
and differed far from the indolence of his father, perished prematurely, or he would have governed the kingdom in a noble manner, had God permitted. When he died, the British strength decayed, and all hope fled from them; and they would soon have perished altogether, had not Ambrosius, the sole survivor of the Romans, who became monarch after Vortigern, quelled the presumptuous barbarians by the powerful aid of warlike Arthur. It is of this Arthur that the Britons fondly tell so many fables, even to the present day; a man worthy to be celebrated, not by idle fictions, but by authentic history. He long upheld the sinking state, and roused the broken spirit of his countrymen to war. Finally, at the siege of Mount Badon,* relying on an image of the Virgin, which he had affixed to his armour, he engaged nine hundred of the enemy, single-handed, and dispersed them with incredible slaughter. On the other side, the Angles, after various revolutions of fortune, filled up their thinned battalions with fresh supplies of their countrymen; rushed with greater courage to the conflict, and extended themselves by degrees, as the natives retreated, over the whole island: for the counsels of God, in whose hand is every change of empire, did not oppose their career. But this was effected in process of time; for while Vortigern lived, no new attempt was made against them. About this time, Hengist, from that bad quality of the human heart, which grasps after more in proportion to what it already possesses, by a preconcerted piece of deception, invited his son-in-law, with three hundred of his followers, to an entertainment; and when, by more than usual compotations, he had excited them to clamour, he began, purposely, to taunt them severally, with sarcastic raillery: this had the desired effect, of making them first quarrel, and then come to blows. Thus the Britons were basely murdered to a man, and breathed their last amid their cups. The king himself, made captive, purchased his liberty at the price of three provinces. After this, Hengist died, in the thirty-ninth year after his arrival; he

* Said to be Banneshaw, near Bath. Giraldus Cambrensis says, the image of the Virgin was fixed on the inside of Arthur’s shield, that he might kiss it in battle. Bede erroneously ascribes this event to A.D. 493. (Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, b. i. c. 6.)
was a man, who urging his success not less by artifice than
courage, and giving free scope to his natural ferocity, pre-
ferred effecting his purpose rather by cruelty than by
kindness. He left a son named Eisc;* who, more intent
on defending, than enlarging, his dominions, never exceeded
the paternal bounds. At the expiration of twenty-four years,
he had for his successors, his son Otha, and Otha's son, Er-
menric, who, in their manners, resembled him, rather than
their grandfather and great grandfather. To the times of
both, the Chronicles assign fifty-three years; but whether
they reigned singly, or together, does not appear.

After them Ethelbert, the son of Ermenric, reigned fifty-
three years according to the Chronicle; but fifty-six accord-
ing to Bede. The reader must determine how this difference
is to be accounted for; as I think it sufficient to have apprized
him of it, I shall let the matter rest.† In the infancy of his
reign, he was such an object of contempt to the neighbouring
kings, that, defeated in two battles, he could scarcely defend
his frontier; afterwards, however, when to his riper years he
had added a more perfect knowledge of war, he quickly, by
successive victories, subdued every kingdom of the Angles,
with the exception of the Northumbrians. And, in order to
obtain foreign connections, he entered into affinity with the
king of France, by marrying his daughter Bertha. And
now by this connection with the Franks, the nation, hitherto
savage and wedded to its own customs, began daily to divest
itself of its rustic propensities and incline to gentler manners.
To this was added the very exemplary life of bishop Luid-
hard, who had come over with the queen, by which, though
silently, he allured the king to the knowledge of Christ our
Lord. Hence it arose, that his mind, already softened, easily
yielded to the preaching of the blessed Augustine; and he
was the first of all his race who renounced the errors of
paganism, that he might obscure, by the glory of his faith,

* According to Sprott, Hengist died in 488, and was succeeded by his
son Octa, vel Osca. Osca died A.D. 498, and Eisc, his son, ascended the
throne. In the year 522 Ermenric, the father of king Ethelbert, reigned.
Ethelbert became king of Kent in 588.
† The difference seems to have arisen from carelessness in the scribe; as
the Saxon Chronicle states him to have ascended the throne A.D. 560, and
to have died 616: which is exactly fifty-six years, although it asserts him to
have reigned only 53.
those whom he surpassed in power. This, indeed, is spotless nobility; this, exalted virtue; to excel in worth those whom you exceed in rank. Besides, extending his care to posterity, he enacted laws, in his native tongue, in which he appointed rewards for the meritorious, and opposed severer restraints to the abandoned, leaving nothing doubtful for the future.*

Ethelbert died in the twenty-first year after he had embraced the Christian faith, leaving the diadem to his son Edbald. As soon as he was freed from the restraints of paternal awe, he rejected Christianity, and overcame the virtue of his stepmother.† But the severity of the divine mercy opposed a barrier to his utter destruction: for the princes, whom his father had subjugated, immediately rebelled, he lost a part of his dominions, and was perpetually haunted by an evil spirit, whereby he paid the penalty of his unbelief. Laurentius, the successor of Augustine, was offended at these transactions, and after having sent away his companions, was meditating his own departure from the country, but having received chastisement from God, he was induced to change his resolution.‡ The king conversing with him on the subject, and finding his assertions confirmed by his stripes, became easily converted, accepted the grace of Christianity, and broke off his incestuous intercourse. But, that posterity might be impressed with the singular punishment due to apostacy, it was with difficulty he could maintain his hereditary dominions, much less rival the eminence of his father. For the remainder of his life, his faith was sound, and he did nothing to sully his reputation. The monastery also, which his father had founded without the walls of Canterbury,§ he ennobled with large estates, and sumptuous presents. The praises and merits of both these men ought ever to be proclaimed, and had in honour by the English; because they allowed the Christian faith to acquire

* See Wilkins’s “Leges Anglo-Saxonice,” and the Textus Roffensis.
† The name of the second queen of Ethelbert is not mentioned, probably on account of this incest.
‡ St. Peter, it is said, appeared to Laurentius at night, and reproaching him for his cowardice, severely chastised him with a scourge; the marks of which had the effect here mentioned the next day. Bede ii. 6. According to Sprott, St. Laurentius became archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 610.
§ St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, completed, according to Sprott, A.D. 663.
strength, in England, by patient listening and willingness to believe. Who can contemplate, without satisfaction, the just and amiable answer which Bede makes king Ethelbert to have given to the first preaching of Augustine? "That he could not, thus early, embrace a new doctrine and leave the accustomed worship of his country; but that, nevertheless, persons who had undertaken so long a journey for the purpose of kindly communicating to the Angles what they deemed an inestimable benefit, far from meeting with ill-treatment, ought rather to be allowed full liberty to preach, and also to receive the ampest maintenance." He fully kept his promise; and at length the truth of Christianity becoming apparent by degrees, himself and all his subjects were admitted into the number of the faithful. And what did the other? Though led away at first, more by the lusts of the flesh than perverseness of heart, yet he paid respect to the virtuous conduct of the prelates, although he neglected their faith; and lastly, as I have related, was easily converted through the sufferings of Laurentius, and became of infinite service to the propagation of Christianity. Both, then, were laudable: both deserved high encomiums; for the good work, so nobly begun by the one, was as kindly fostered by the other.

To him, after a reign of twenty-four years, succeeded Eroconbert, his son, by Emma, daughter of the king of France. He reigned an equal number of years with his father, but under happier auspices; alike remarkable for piety towards God, and love to his country. For his grandfather, and father, indeed, adopted our faith, but neglected to destroy their idols; whilst he, thinking it derogatory to his royal zeal not to take the readiest mode of annihilating openly what they only secretly condemned, levelled every temple of their gods to the ground, that not a trace of their paganism might be handed down to posterity. This was nobly done: for the mass of the people would be reminded of their superstition, so long as they could see the altars of their deities. In order, also, that he might teach his subjects, who were too much given to sensual indulgence, to accustom themselves to temperance, he enjoined the solemn fast of Lent to be observed throughout his dominions. This was an extraordinary act for the king to attempt in those times:
but he was a man whom no blandishments of luxury could enervate; no anxiety for power seduce from the worship of God. Wherefore he was protected by the favour of the Almighty; every thing, at home and abroad, succeeded to his wishes, and he grew old in uninterrupted tranquillity. His daughter Ercongotha, a child worthy of such a parent, and emulating her father in virtuous qualities, became a shining light in the monastery of Kalas in Gaul.*

His son Egbert, retaining his father’s throne for nine years, did nothing memorable in so short a reign; unless indeed it be ascribed to the glory of this period, that Theodore† the archbishop, and Adrian the abbat, two consummate scholars, came into England in his reign. Were not the subject already trite, I should willingly record what light they shed upon the Britons; how on one side the Greeks, and on the other the Latins, emulously contributed their knowledge to the public stock, and made this island, once the nurse of tyrants, the constant residence of philosophy: but this and every other merit of the times of Egbert is clouded by his horrid crime, of either destroying, or permitting to be destroyed, Elbert and Egelbright, his nephews.‡

To Egbert succeeded his brother Lothere, who began his reign with unpropitious omens. For he was harassed during eleven years by Edric, the son of Egbert, and engaged in many civil conflicts which terminated with various success, until he was ultimately pierced through the body with a dart, and died while they were applying remedies to the wound. Some say, that both the brothers perished by a premature death as a just return for their cruelty; because Egbert, as I have related, murdered the innocent children of his uncle; and Lothere ridiculed the notion of holding them up as martyrs: although the former had lamented the action, and had granted a part of the Isle of Thanet to the mother of his nephews, for the purpose of building a monastery.

* Chelles, near Paris.
† Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, and a prelate of great learning; but it being apprehended by Pope Vitalian that he might rather incline to the doctrines of the Greek Church, Adrian was sent with him, as a kind of superintendent, and was appointed abbat of St. Augustine’s.
‡ See book ii. chap. 13, “but this and every other,” &c. Some editions omit this passage altogether.
Nor did Edric long boast the prosperous state of his government; for within two years he was despoiled both of kingdom and of life, and left his country to be torn in pieces by its enemies. Immediately Cædwalla, with his brother Mull, in other respects a good and able man, but breathing an inextinguishable hatred against the people of Kent, made vigorous attempts upon the province; supposing it must easily surrender to his views, as it had lately been in the enjoyment of long continued peace, but at that time was torn with intestine war. He found, however, the inhabitants by no means unprepared or void of courage, as he had expected. For, after many losses sustained in the towns and villages, at length they rushed with spirit to the conflict. They gained the victory in the contest, and having put Cædwalla to flight, drove his brother Mull into a little cottage, which they set on fire. Thus, wanting courage to sally out against the enemy, the fire gained uncontrolled power, and he perished in the flames. Nevertheless Cædwalla ceased not his efforts, nor retired from the province; but consoled himself for his losses by repeatedly ravaging the district; however, he left the avenging of this injury to Ina, his successor, as will be related in its place.

In this desperate state of the affairs of Kent, there was a void of about six years in the royal succession. In the seventh, Withred, the son of Egbert, having repressed the malevolence of his countrymen by his activity, and purchased peace from his enemies by money, was chosen king by the inhabitants, who entertained great and well-founded hopes of him. He was an admirable ruler at home, invincible in war, and a truly pious follower of the Christian faith, for he extended its power to the utmost. And, to complete his felicity, after a reign of thirty-three years, he died in extreme old age, which men generally reckon to be their greatest happiness, leaving his three children his heirs. These were Egbert, Ethelbert, and Alric, and they reigned twenty-three, eleven, and thirty-four years successively, without deviation from the excellent example and institutions of their father, except that Ethelbert, by the casual burning of Canterbury, and Alric, by an unsuccessful battle with the Mercians, considerably obscured the glory of their reigns. So it is that, if any thing disgraceful occurs, it is not concealed; if any thing
fortunate, it is not sufficiently noticed in the Chronicles; whether it be done designedly, or whether it arise from that bad quality of the human mind, which makes gratitude for good transient; whereas the recollection of evil remains for ever. After these men the noble stock of kings began to wither, the royal blood to flow cold. Then every daring adventurer, who had acquired riches by his eloquence, or whom faction had made formidable, aspired to the kingdom, and disgraced the ensigns of royalty. Of these, Edbert otherwise called Pren, after having governed Kent two years, over-rating his power, was taken prisoner in a war with the Mercians, and loaded with chains. But being set at liberty by his enemies, though not received by his own subjects, it is uncertain by what end he perished. Cuthred, heir to the same faction and calamity, reigned, in name only, eight years. Next Baldred, a mere abortion of a king, after having for eighteen years more properly possessed, than governed the kingdom, went into exile, on his defeat by Egbert, king of the West Saxons. Thus the kingdom of Kent, which, from the year of our Lord 449, had continued 375 years, became annexed to another. And since by following the royal line of the first kingdom which arose among the Angles, I have elicited a spark, as it were, from the embers of antiquity, I shall now endeavour to throw light on the kingdom of the West Saxons, which, though after a considerable lapse of time, was the next that sprang up. While others were neglected and wasted away, this flourished with unconquerable vigour, even to the coming of the Normans; and, if I may be permitted the expression, with greedy jaws swallowed up the rest. Wherefore, after tracing this kingdom in detail down to Egbert, I shall briefly, for fear of disgusting my readers, subjoin some notices of the two remaining; this will be a suitable termination to the first book, and the second will continue the history of the West Saxons alone.

CHAP. II.

Of the kings of the West Saxons. [A.D. 495.]

The kingdom of the West Saxons,—and one more magnificent or lasting Britain never beheld,—sprang from Cerdic, and soon
increased to great importance. He was a German by nation, of the noblest race, being the tenth from Woden, and, having nurtured his ambition in domestic broils, determined to leave his native land and extend his fame by the sword. Having formed this daring resolution he communicated his design to Cenric his son, who closely followed his father's track to glory, and with his concurrence transported his forces into Britain in five ceols. This took place in the year of our Saviour's incarnation 495, and the eighth after the death of Hengist. Coming into action with the Britons the very day of his arrival, this experienced soldier soon defeated an undisciplined multitude, and compelled them to fly. By this success he obtained perfect security in future for himself, as well as peace for the inhabitants of those parts. For they never dared after that day to attack him, but voluntarily submitted to his dominion. Nevertheless he did not waste his time in indolence; but, on the contrary, extending his conquests on all sides, by the time he had been twenty-four years in the island, he had obtained the supremacy of the western part of it, called West-Saxony. He died after enjoying it sixteen years, and his whole kingdom, with the exception of the isle of Wight, descended to his son. This, by the royal munificence, became subject to his nephew, Withgar; who was as dear to his uncle by the ties of kindred, for he was his sister's son, as by his skill in war, and formed a noble principality in the island, where he was afterwards splendidly interred. Cenric moreover, who was as illustrious as his father, after twenty-six years, bequeathed the kingdom, somewhat enlarged, to his son Ceawlin.

The Chronicles extol the singular valour of this man in battle, so as to excite a degree of envious admiration; for he was the astonishment of the Angles, the detestation of the Britons, and was eventually the destruction of both. I shall briefly subjoin some extracts from them. Attacking Ethelbert king of Kent, who was a man in other respects laudable, but at that time was endeavouring from the consciousness of his family's dignity to gain the ascendency, and, on this account, making too eager incursions on the territories of his neighbour, he routed his troops and forced him to retreat. The Britons, who, in the times of his father and grandfather, had escaped destruction either by a show of submission, or
by the strength of their fortifications at Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath, he now pursued with ceaseless rancour; ejected them from their cities, and chased them into mountainous and woody districts, as at the present day. But about this time, as some unluckily throw of the dice in the table of human life perpetually disappoints mankind, his military successes were clouded by domestic calamity: his brother Cutha met an untimely death, and he had a son of the same name taken off in battle; both young men of great expectation, whose loss he frequently lamented as a severe blow to his happiness. Finally, in his latter days, himself, banished from his kingdom, presented a spectacle, pitiable even to his enemies. For he had sounded, as it were, the trumpet of his own detestation on all sides, and the Angles as well as the Britons conspiring against him, his forces were destroyed at Wodensdike; * he lost his kingdom thirty-one years after he had gained it; went into exile, and shortly after died. The floating reins of government were then directed by his nephews, the sons of Cutha, that is to say, Celric during six, Ceolwulf during fourteen years: of these the inferior with respect to age, but the more excellent in spirit, passed all his days in war, nor ever neglected, for a moment, the protection and extension of his empire.

After him, the sons of Celric, Cyngils and Cuichelm, jointly put on the ensigns of royalty; both active, both contending with each other only in mutual offices of kindness; insomuch, that to their contemporaries they were a miracle of concord very unusual amongst princes, and to posterity a proper example. It is difficult to say whether their courage or their moderation exceeded in the numberless contests in which they engaged either against the Britons, or against Penda, king of the Mercians: a man, as will be related in its place, wonderfully expert in the subtleties of war; and who, overpassing the limits of his own territory, in an attempt to add Cirencester to his possessions, being unable to withstand the power of these united kings, escaped with only a few followers. A considerable degree of guilt indeed attaches to Cuichelm, for attempting to take off, by the hands of an assassin, Edwin king of the Northumbrians, a

* Wansdike, in Wiltshire.
man of acknowledged prudence. Yet, if the heathen maxim,

Who asks if fraud or force availed the foe? *

be considered, he will be readily excused, as having done
nothing uncommon, in wishing to get rid, by whatever means,
of a rival encroaching on his power. For he had formerly
lopped off much from the West Saxon empire, and now
receiving fresh ground of offence, and his ancient enmity
reviving, he inflicted heavy calamities on that people. The
kings, however, escaped, and were, not long after, enlightened
with the heavenly doctrine, by the means of St. Birinus the
bishop, in the twenty-fifth year of their reign, and the
fortieth after the coming of the blessed Augustine, the
apostle of the Angles. Cynegils, veiling his princely pride,
condescended to receive immediately the holy rite of baptism:
Cuichelm resisted for a time, but warned, by the sickness of
his body, not to endanger the salvation of his soul, he became
a sharer in his brother's piety, and died the same year.
Cynegils departed six years afterwards, in the thirty-first
year of his reign, enjoying the happiness of a long-extended
peace.

Kenwalk his son succeeded: in the beginning of his reign,
to be compared only to the worst of princes; but, in the
succeeding and latter periods, a rival of the best. The
moment the young man became possessed of power, wantoning
in regal luxury and disregarding the acts of his father, he
abjured Christianity and legitimate marriage; but being
attacked and defeated by Penda, king of Mercia, whose
sister he had repudiated, he fled to the king of the East
Angles. Here, by a sense of his own calamities and by the
perseverance of his host, he was once more brought back to
the Christian faith; and after three years, recovering his
strength and resuming his kingdom, he exhibited to his
subjects the joyful miracle of his reformation. So valiant
was he, that, he who formerly was unable to defend his own
territories, now extended his dominion on every side;
totally defeating in two actions the Britons, furious
with the recollection of their ancient liberty, and in conse-
quence perpetually meditating resistance; first, at a place
called Witgeornesburg,† and then at a mountain named

Penda; * and again, avenging the injury of his father on Wulfhere, the son of Penda, he deprived him of the greatest part of his kingdom: moreover he was so religious, that, first of all his race, he built, for those times, a most beautiful church at Winchester, on which site afterwards was founded the episcopal see with still more skilful magnificence.

But since we have arrived at the times of Kenwalk, and the proper place occurs for mentioning the monastery of Glastonbury; † I shall trace from its very origin the rise and progress of that church as far as I am able to discover it from the mass of evidences. It is related in annals of good credit that Lucius, king of the Britons, sent to Pope Eleutherius, thirteenth in succession from St. Peter, to entreat, that he would dispel the darkness of Britain by the splendour of Christian instruction. This surely was the commendable deed of a magnanimous prince, eagerly to seek that faith, the mention of which had barely reached him, at a time when it was an object of persecution to almost every king and people to whom it was offered. In consequence, preachers, sent by Eleutherius, came into Britain, the effects of whose labours will remain for ever, although the rust of antiquity may have obliterated their names. By these was built the ancient church of St. Mary of Glastonbury, as faithful tradition has handed down through decaying time. Moreover there are documents of no small credit, which have been discovered in certain places to the following effect: "No other hands than those of the disciples of Christ erected the church of Glastonbury." Nor is it dissonant from probability: for if Philip, the Apostle, preached to the Gauls, as Freculphus relates in the fourth chapter of his second book, it may be believed that he also planted the word on this side of the channel also. But that I may not seem to balk the expectation of my readers by vain imaginations, leaving all doubtful matter, I shall proceed to the relation of substantial truths.

* Pen, in Somersetshire.

† Malmesbury wrote a History of Glastonbury, which is printed in Gale’s Collection, vol. iii. and by Hearne, in the History of Glastonbury, and from this work he extracts this account. Sharpe gives it [from “But since,” &c. to “character so munificent” in page 29, line 2], in a note as a various reading of one of the MSS. The note occupies the greater part of seven pages from 25 to 31 in Sharpe’s original volume.
The church of which we are speaking, from its antiquity called by the Angles, by way of distinction, "Ealde Chirche," that is, the "Old Church," of wattle-work, at first, savoured somewhat of heavenly sanctity even from its very foundation, and exhaled it over the whole country; claiming superior reverence, though the structure was mean. Hence, here arrived whole tribes of the lower orders, thronging every path; here assembled the opulent divested of their pomp; and it became the crowded residence of the religious and the literary. For, as we have heard from men of old time, here Gildas, an historian neither unlearned nor inelegant, to whom the Britons are indebted for whatever notice they obtain among other nations, captivated by the sanctity of the place, took up his abode for a series of years.* This church, then, is certainly the oldest I am acquainted with in England, and from this circumstance derives its name. In it are preserved the mortal remains of many saints, some of whom we shall notice in our progress, nor is any corner of the church destitute of the ashes of the holy. The very floor, inlaid with polished stone, and the sides of the altar, and even the altar itself above and beneath are laden with the multitude of relics. Moreover in the pavement may be remarked on every side stones designedly interlaid in triangles and squares, and figured with lead, under which if I believe some sacred enigma to be contained, I do no injustice to religion. The antiquity, and multitude of its saints, have endued the place with so much sanctity, that, at night, scarcely any one presumes to keep vigil there, or, during the day, to spit upon its floor: he who is conscious of pollution shudders throughout his whole frame: no one ever brought hawk or horses within the confines of the neighbouring cemetery, who did not depart injured either in them or in himself. Within the memory of man, all persons who, before undergoing the ordeal † of fire or water, there put up

* There is a Life of Gildas, written not long after this history, by Caradoc of Lancarvon, in which we are told, that, while he was residing at Glastonbury, a prince of that country carried off Arthur's queen and lodged her there; that Arthur immediately besieged it, but, through the mediation of the abbot, and of Gildas, consented, at length, to receive his wife again and to depart peaceably.

† The ordeal was an appeal to heaven to decide immediately on the justice of the cause. There were many modes of this whimsical trial; as
their petitions, exulted in their escape, one only excepted: if any person erected a building in its vicinity, which by its shade obstructed the light of the church, it forthwith became a ruin. And it is sufficiently evident, that, the men of that province had no oath more frequent, or more sacred, than to swear by the Old Church, fearing the swiftest vengeance on their perjury in this respect. The truth of what I have asserted, if it be dubious, will be supported by testimony in the book which I have written, on the antiquity of the said church, according to the series of years.

In the meantime it is clear, that the depository of so many saints may be deservedly styled an heavenly sanctuary upon earth. There are numbers of documents, though I abstain from mentioning them for fear of causing weariness, to prove how extremely venerable this place was held by the chief persons of the country, who there more especially chose to await the day of resurrection under the protection of the mother of God. Willingly would I declare the meaning of those pyramids, which are almost incomprehensible to all, could I but ascertain the truth. These, situated some few feet from the church, border on the cemetery of the monks. That which is the loftiest and nearest the church, is twenty-eight feet high and has five stories: this, though threatening ruin from its extreme age, possesses nevertheless some traces of antiquity, which may be clearly read though not perfectly understood. In the highest story is an image in a pontifical habit. In the next a statue of regal dignity, and the letters, Her Sexi, and Blisperh. In the third, too, are the names, Pencrest, Bantomp, Pinepegn. In the fourth, Bate, Pulfred, and Eanfled. In the fifth, which is the lowest, there is an image, and the words as follow, Logor, Peslicas, and Bregden, Spelpes, Highingendes Bearn. The other pyramid is twenty-six feet high and has four stories, in which are read, Kentwin, Hedda the bishop, and Bregored and Beorward. The meaning of these I do not hastily decide, but I shrewdly conjecture that within, in stone coffins, are contained the

by handling hot iron, plunging the arm into hot water, throwing the accused into water, &c. If, after three days, the party exhibited no mark of burning in the two former; or if he did not sink in the latter experiment, he was considered innocent. The whole was conducted with great solemnity; the ritual may be seen in Spelman, voce Ordalium.
bones of those persons whose names are inscribed without.* At least Logor is said to imply the person from whom Log-
peresbeorh formerly took its name, which is now called Mont-
tacute; Bregden, from whom is derived Brentknolle and Brentmarsh; Bregored and Beorward were abbots of that place in the time of the Britons; of whom, and of others which occur, I shall henceforward speak more circumstan-
tially. For my history will now proceed to disclose the suc-
cession of abbots, and what was bestowed on each, or on the monasteries, and by what particular king.

And first, I shall briefly mention St. Patrick, from whom the series of our records dawns. While the Saxons were disturbing the peace of the Britons, and the Pelagians assaul-
ting their faith, St. Germanus of Auxerre assisted them against both; routing the one by the chorus of Hallelujah,† and hurling down the other by the thunder of the Evangelists and Apostles. Thence returning to his own country, he summoned Patrick to become his inmate, and after a few years, sent him, at the instance of Pope Celestine, to preach to the Irish. Whence it is written in the Chronicles, “In the year of our Lord’s incarnation 425, St. Patrick is or-
dained to Ireland by Pope Celestine.” Also, “In the year 433 Ireland is converted to the faith of Christ by the preachment of St. Patrick, accompanied by many miracles.” In con-
sequence executing his appointed office with diligence, and in his latter days returning to his own country, he landed in Cornwall, from his altar,‡ which even to this time is held in high veneration by the inhabitants for its sanctity and effi-
cacy in restoring the infirm. Proceeding to Glastonbury, and there becoming monk, and abbat, after some years he paid the debt of nature. All doubt of the truth of this

* The Saxon mode of interment appears frequently to have been under pyramids or obelisks. See Anglia Sacra, ii. 110.
† St. Germanus drew up a body of his new converts in a valley surrounded on every side by mountains, and, on the approach of their enemies, ordered that on a given signal, all should shout “Hallelujah.” The sudden sound, being reverberated by the surrounding mountains, struck their foes with such a panic, that they instantly fled. See Bede, Hist. Eccl. b. i. c. 20.
‡ Patrick is said to have floated over, from Ireland, on this altar, and to have landed near Padstow in Cornwall. Gough’s Camden, i. 19. Malmes-
bury appears to have been miled by the Glastonbury historian, so as to con-
found St. Patrick with St. Petrock. From the latter, the town of Padstow de-
rives its name, as is proved by Whitaker, in his Ancient Cathedral of Cornwall.
assertion is removed by the vision of a certain brother, who, after the saint's death, when it had frequently become a question, through decay of evidence, whether he really was monk and abbat there, had the fact confirmed by the following oracle. When asleep he seemed to hear some person reading, after many of his miracles, the words which follow — "this man then was adorned by the sanctity of the metropolitan pall, but afterwards was here made monk and abbat." He added, moreover, as the brother did not give implicit credit to him, that he could show what he had said inscribed in golden letters. Patrick died in the year of his age 111, of our Lord's incarnation 472, being the forty-seventh year after he was sent into Ireland. He lies on the right side of the altar in the old church: indeed the care of posterity has enshrined his body in silver. Hence the Irish have an ancient usage of frequenting the place to kiss the relics of their patron. Wherefore the report is extremely prevalent that both St. Indract and St. Brigit, no mean inhabitants of Ireland, formerly came over to this spot. Whether Brigit returned home or died at Glastonbury is not sufficiently ascertained, though she left here some of her ornaments; that is to say, her necklace, scrip, and implements for embroidering, which are yet shown in memory of her sanctity, and are efficacious in curing divers diseases. In the course of my narrative it will appear that St. Indract, with seven companions, was martyred near Glastonbury, and afterwards interred in the old church.*

Benignus succeeded Patrick in the government of the abbey; but for how long, remains in doubt. Who he was, and how called in the vernacular tongue, the verses of his epitaph at Ferramere express, not inaptly:

Beneath this marble Beon's ashes lie,
Once rev'rend abbat of this monastery:
Saint Patrick's servant, as the Irish frame
The legend-tale, and Beon was his name.

The wonderful works both of his former life, and since his recent translation into the greater church, proclaim the sin-

* On their return from a pilgrimage to Rome they designed visiting Glastonbury, out of respect to St. Patrick; and filled their scrips with parsley and various other seeds, which they purposed carrying to Ireland, but their staves being tipped with brass, which was mistaken for gold, they were murdered for the supposed booty.
gular grace of God which he anciently possessed, and which he still retains.

The esteem in which David, archbishop of Menevia, held this place, is too notorious to require repeating. He established the antiquity and sanctity of the church by a divine oracle; for purposing to dedicate it, he came to the spot with his seven suffragan bishops, and every thing being prepared for the due celebration of the solemnity, on the night, as he purposed, preceding it, he gave way to profound repose. When all his senses were steeped in rest, he beheld the Lord Jesus standing near, and mildly inquiring the cause of his arrival; and on his immediately disclosing it, the Lord diverted him from his purpose by saying, "That the church had been already dedicated by himself in honour of his Mother, and that the ceremony was not to be profaned by human repetition." With these words he seemed to bore the palm of his hand with his finger, adding, "That this was a sign for him not to reiterate what himself had done before. But that, since his design savoured more of piety than of temerity, his punishment should not be prolonged: and lastly, that on the following morning, when he should repeat the words of the mass, 'With him, and by him, and in him,' his health should return to him undiminished." The prelate, awakened by these terrific appearances, as at the moment he grew pale at the purulent matter, so afterwards he hailed the truth of the prediction. But that he might not appear to have done nothing, he quickly built and dedicated another church. Of this celebrated and incomparable man, I am at a loss to decide, whether he closed his life in this place, or at his own cathedral. For they affirm that he is with St. Patrick; and the Welsh, both by the frequency of their prayers to him and by various reports, without doubt confirm and establish this opinion; openly alleging that bishop Bernard sought after him more than once, notwithstanding much opposition, but was not able to find him. But let thus much suffice of St. David.

After a long lapse of time, St. Augustine, at the instance of St. Gregory, came into Britain in the year of our Lord's incarnation 596, and the tradition of our ancestors has handed down, that the companion of his labours, Paulinus, who was bishop of Rochester after being archbishop of
York, covered the church, built, as we have before observed, of wattle-work, with a casing of boards. The dexterity of this celebrated man so artfully managed, that nothing of its sanctity should be lost, though much should accrue to its beauty: and certainly the more magnificent the ornaments of churches are, the more they incline the brute mind to prayer, and bend the stubborn to supplication.

In the year of our Lord’s incarnation 601, that is, the fifth after the arrival of St. Augustine, the king of Devonshire, on the petition of abbat Worgræz, granted to the old church which is there situated the land called Ineswitrin, containing five cassates.* “I, Maworn, bishop, wrote this grant. I, Worgræz, abbat of the same place, signed it.”

Who this king might be, the antiquity of the instrument prevents our knowing. But that he was a Briton cannot be doubted, because he called Glastonbury, Ineswitrin, in his vernacular tongue; and that, in the British, it is so called, is well known. Moreover it is proper to remark the extreme antiquity of a church, which, even then, was called “the old church.” In addition to Worgræz, Lademund and Bregored, whose very names imply British barbarism, were abbats of this place. The periods of their presiding are uncertain, but their names and dignities are indicated by a painting in the larger church, near the altar. Blessed, therefore, are the inhabitants of this place, allured to uprightness of life, by reverence for such a sanctuary. I cannot suppose that any of these, when dead, can fail of heaven, when assisted by the virtues and intercession of so many patrons. In the year of our Lord’s incarnation 670, and the 29th of his reign, Kenwalk gave to Berthwald, abbat of Glastonbury, Ferramere, two hides, at the request of archbishop Theodore. The same Berthwald, against the will of the king and of the bishop of the diocese, relinquishing Glastonbury, went to govern the monastery of Reculver. In consequence, Berthwald equally renowned for piety and high birth, being nephew to Ethelred, king of the Mercians, and residing in the vicinity of Canterbury, on the demise of archbishop Theodore, succeeded to his see. This may be sufficient for me to have inserted on the antiquity of the church of Glas-

* It is understood as synonymous with hide, or as much land as one plough could till.
tonbury. Now I shall return in course to Kenwalk, who was of a character so munificent that he never refused to give any part of his patrimony to his relations; but with noble-minded generosity conferred nearly the third of his kingdom on his nephew.* These qualities of the royal mind, were stimulated by the admonitions of those holy bishops of his province, Agilbert, of whom Bede relates many commendable things in his history of the Angles, and his nephew Leutherius, who, after him, was, for seven years, bishop of the West Saxons. This circumstance I have thought proper to mention, because Bede has left no account of the duration of his episcopacy, and to disguise a fact which I learn from the Chronicles, would be against my conscience; besides, it affords an opportunity for making mention of a distinguished man, who by a mind, clear, and almost divinely inspired, advanced the monastery of Malmesbury, where I carry on my earthly warfare, to the highest pitch. This monastery was so slenderly endowed by Maildulph, a Scot, as they say, by nation, a philosopher by erudition, and a monk by profession, that its members could scarcely procure their daily subsistence; but Leutherius, after long and due deliberation, gave it to Aldhelm,† a monk of the same place, to be by him governed with the authority then possessed by bishops. Of which matter, that my relation may obviate every doubt, I shall subjoin his own words.

"I, Leutherius, by divine permission, bishop supreme of the Saxon see, am requested by the abbots who, within the jurisdiction of our diocese, preside over the conventual assemblies of monks with pastoral anxiety, to give and to grant that portion of land called Maildulfesburgh, to Aldhelm the priest, for the purpose of leading a life according to strict rule; in which place, indeed, from his earliest infancy and first initiation in the study of learning, he has been instructed in the liberal arts, and passed his days, nurtured in the bosom of the holy mother church; and on which account fraternal love appears principally to have conceived this request. Wherefore assenting to the petition of the aforesaid abbots, I willingly grant that place to him and his successors, who shall sedulously follow the laws of the holy

institution. Done publicly near the river Bladon;* this eighth before the kalends of September, in the year of our Lord's incarnation 672."

But when the industry of the abbat was superadded to the kindness of the bishop, then the affairs of the monastery began to flourish exceedingly; then monks assembled on all sides; there was a general concourse to Aldhelm; some admiring the sanctity of his life, others the depth of his learning. For he was a man as unsophisticated in religion as multifarious in knowledge; whose piety surpassed even his reputation; and he had so fully imbibed the liberal arts, that he was wonderful in each of them, and unrivalled in all. I greatly err, if his works written on the subject of virginity,† than which, in my opinion, nothing can be more pleasing or more splendid, are not proofs of his immortal genius: although, such is the slothfulness of our times, they may excite disgust in some persons, not duly considering how modes of expression differ according to the customs of nations. The Greeks, for instance, express themselves impliedly, the Romans clearly, the Gauls gorgeously, the Angles turgidly. And truly, as it is pleasant to dwell on the graces of our ancestors and to animate our minds by their example, I would here, most willingly, unfold what painful labours this holy man encountered for the privileges of our church, and with what miracles he signalized his life, did not my avocations lead me elsewhere; and his noble acts appear clearer even to the eye of the purblind, than they can possibly be sketched by my pencil. The innumerable miracles which now take place at his tomb, manifest to the present race the sanctity of the life he passed. He has therefore his proper praise; he has the fame acquired by his merits.‡ We proceed with the history.

* Where this river was is not known: it has been conjectured it should be Avon. Malmesbury is also said to have been originally called Bladon.

† De Laudibus Virginítatis. His "Commendation of Virginity," was first written in prose; and was printed by H. Wharton, 4to. 1693. He afterwards versified it with occasional amplifications or omissions. Some MSS. give the date as 671: others 672; and others again 675. See Caninius, Antiquæ Lectiones, t. i. 713. Ed. Barmaghi. The whole works of Aldhelm have been collected for the first time by the present editor, and form vol. l. of Patres Ecclesiæ Anglicæ.

‡ Malmesbury afterwards wrote the life of Aldhelm. It ought to form
After thirty-one years, Kenwalk dying, bequeathed the
administration of the government to his wife Sexburga; nor
did this woman want spirit for discharging the duties of the
station. She levied new forces, preserved the old in their
duty; ruled her subjects with moderation, and overawed her
enemies: in short, she conducted all things in such a manner,
that no difference was discernible except that of her sex.
But, breathing more than female spirit, she died, having
scarcely reigned a year.

Escwin passed the next two years in the government; a
near relation to the royal family, being grand-nephew to
Cynegils, by his brother Cuthgist. At his death, either
natural or violent, for I cannot exactly find which, Kentwin,
the son of Cynegils, filled the vacant throne in legitimate
succession. Both were men of noted experience in war; as
the one routed the Mercians, the other the Britons, with
dreadful slaughter: but they were to be pitied for the short-
ness of their career; the reign of the latter not extending
beyond nine, that of the former, more than two years, as I
have already related. This is on the credit of the Chronicles.
However, Bede records that they did not reign successively,
but divided the kingdom between them.

Next sprang forth a noble branch of the royal stock, Cæd-
walla, grand-nephew of Ceawlin, by his brother Cutha: a
youth of unbounded promise, who allowed no opportunity of
exercising his valour to escape him. He, having long since,
by his active exertions, excited the animosity of the princes
of his country, was, by a conspiracy, driven into exile,
Yielding to this outrage, as the means of depriving the
province of its warlike force, he led away all the military
population with him; for, whether out of pity to his broken
fortunes, or regard for his valour, the whole of the youth
accompanied him into exile. Ethelwalch, king of the South
Saxons, hazarding an engagement with him, felt the first
effects of his fury: for he was routed with all the forces he had
collected, and too late repented his rash design.* The spirits
of his followers being thus elated, Cædwalla, by a sudden
and unexpected return, drove the rivals of his power from

the fifth book "de Gentibus Pontificum," but has never yet been printed in
the same volume with the four preceding books.

* See Bede, b. iv. c. 15.
the kingdom. Enjoying his government for the space of two years, he performed many signal exploits. His hatred and hostility towards the South Saxons were inextinguishable, and he totally destroyed Edric, the successor of Ethelwalch, who opposed him with renovated boldness: he nearly depopulated the Isle of Wight, which had rebelled in confederacy with the Mercians: he also gained repeated victories over the people of Kent, as I have mentioned before in their history. Finally, as is observed above, he retired from that province, on the death of his brother, compensating his loss by the blood of many of its inhabitants. It is difficult to relate, how extremely pious he was even before his baptism, insomuch that he dedicated to God the tenth of all the spoils which he had acquired in war. In which, though we approve the intention, we condemn the example; according to the saying: “He who offers sacrifice from the substance of a poor man, is like him who immolates the son in the sight of the father.” That he went to Rome to be baptized by Pope Sergius, and was called Peter; and that he yielded joyfully to the will of heaven, while yet in his initiatory robes, are matters too well known to require our illustration.

After his departure to Rome, the government was assumed by Ina, grand-nephew of Ceinwgils by his brother Cuthbald, who ascended the throne, more from the innate activity of his spirit, than any legitimate right of succession. He was a rare example of fortitude; a mirror of prudence; unequalled in piety. Thus regulating his life, he gained favour at home and respect abroad. Safe from any apprehensions of treachery, he grew old in the discharge of his duties for fifty-eight years, the pious conciliator of general esteem. His first expedition was against the people of Kent, as the indignation at their burning Moll had not yet subsided. The inhabitants resisted awhile: but soon finding all their attempts and endeavours fail, and seeing nothing in the disposition of Ina which could lead them to suppose he would remit his exertions, they were induced, by the contemplation of their losses, to treat of a surrender. They tempt the royal mind with presents, lure him with promises, and bargain for a peace for thirty thousand marks of gold, that, softened by so high a price, he should put an end to the war, and, bound in golden chains, sound a retreat. Accept
ing the money, as a sufficient atonement for their offence, he returned into his kingdom. And not only the people of Kent, but the East Angles* also felt the effects of his hereditary anger; all their nobility being first expelled, and afterwards routed in battle. But let the relation of his military successes here find a termination. Moreover how sedulous he was in religious matters, the laws he enacted to reform the manners of the people, are proof sufficient;† in which the image of his purity is reflected even upon the present times. Another proof are the monasteries nobly founded at the king's expense. But‡ more especially Glastonbury, whither he ordered the bodies of the blessed martyr, Indract, and of his associates, to be taken from the place of their martyrdom and to be conveyed into the church. The body of St. Indract he deposited in the stone pyramid on the left side of the altar, where the zeal of posterity afterwards also placed St. Hilda: the others were distributed beneath the pavement as chance directed or regard might suggest. Here, too, he erected a church, dedicated to the holy apostles, as an appendage to the ancient church, of which we are speaking, enriched it with vast possessions, and granted it a privilege to the following effect:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: I, Ina, supported in my royal dignity by God, with the advice of my queen, Sexburga, and the permission of Berthwald, archbishop of Canterbury, and of all his suffragans; and also at the instance of the princes Baitred and Athelard, to the ancient church, situate in the place called Glastonbury (which church the great high-priest and chiefest minister formerly through his own ministry, and that of angels, sanctified by many and unheard-of miracles to himself and the eternal Virgin Mary, as was formerly revealed to St. David,) do grant out of those

* The Saxon Chronicle and Florence of Worcester mention his attacks on the South Saxons, but do not notice the East Angles.
† See Wilkins's Leges Anglo-Saxonicae.
‡ Some manuscripts omit all that follows to "Berthwald, archbishop of Canterbury," p. 35, and insert in place of it "More especially that at Glastonbury most celebrated in our days, which he erected in a low retired situation, in order that the monks might more eagerly thirst after heavenly, in proportion as they were less affected by earthly things." Sharpe inserts the shorter passage in his text, and gives the longer in a note.
places, which I possess by paternal inheritance, and hold in my demesne, they being adjacent and fitting for the purpose, for the maintenance of the monastic institution, and the use of the monks, Brenten ten hides, Sowy ten hides, Pilton twenty hides, Dulting twenty hides, Bledenhida one hide, together with whatever my predecessors have contributed to the same church: * to wit, Kenwalk, who, at the instance of archbishop Theodore, gave Ferramere, Bregarai, Conencie, Martineaeie, Etheredseie; Kentwin, who used to call Glastonbury, "the mother of saints," and liberated it from every secular and ecclesiastical service, and granted it this dignified privilege, that the brethren of that place should have the power of electing and appointing their ruler according to the rule of St. Benedict: Hedda the bishop, with permission of Caedwala, who, though a heathen, confirmed it with his own hand, gave Lantokay: Baltred, who gave Pennard, six hides: Athelard who contributed Poelt, sixty hides; I, Ina, permitting and confirming it. To the piety and affectionate entreaty of these people I assent, and I guard by the security of my royal grant against the designs of malignant men and snarling curs, in order that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal Virgin Mary, as it is the first in the kingdom of Britain and the source and the fountain of all religion, may obtain surpassing dignity and privilege, and, as she rules over choirs of angels in heaven, it may never pay servile obedience to men on earth. Wherefore the chief pontiff, Gregory, assenting, and taking the mother of his Lord, and me, however unworthy, together with her, into the bosom and protection of the holy Roman church; and all the princes, archbishops, bishops, dukes, and abbots of Britain consenting, I appoint and establish, that, all lands, places, and possessions of St. Mary of Glastonbury be free, quiet, and undisturbed, from all royal taxes and works, which are wont to be appointed, that is to say, expeditions, the building of bridges or forts, and from the edicts or molestation of all archbishops or bishops, as is found to be confirmed and granted by my predecessors, Kenwalk, Kentwin, Caedwala, Baltred, in the ancient charters of the same church. And whatsoever questions shall arise, whether of homicide, sacrilege, poison, theft, rapine, the dis-

* See Kemble's Charters, vol. i. p. 85.
posal and limits of churches, the ordination of clerks, eccle-
siastical synods, and all judicial inquiries, they shall be deter-
mined by the decision of the abbat and convent, without the
interference of any person whatsoever. Moreover, I command
all princes, archbishops, bishops, dukes, and governors of my
kingdom, as they tender my honour and regard, and all de-
pendants, mine as well as theirs, as they value their personal
safety, never to dare enter the island of our Lord Jesus
Christ and of the eternal Virgin, at Glastonbury, nor the
possessions of the said church, for the purpose of holding
courts, making inquiry, or seizing, or doing anything what-
ever to the offence of the servants of God there residing:
moreover I particularly inhibit, by the curse of Almighty
God, of the eternal Virgin Mary, and of the holy apostles
Peter and Paul, and of the rest of the saints, any bishop on
any account whatever from presuming to take his episcopal
seat or celebrate divine service or consecrate altars, or dedi-
cate churches, or ordain, or do any thing whatever, either in
the church of Glastonbury itself, or its dependent churches,
that is to say—Sowy, Brente, Merlinch, Sapewic, Stret,
Sbudeclalech, Pilton, or in their chapels, or islands, unless he
be specially invited by the abbat or brethren of that place.
But if he come upon such invitation, he shall take nothing
to himself of the things of the church, nor of the offerings;
knowing that he has two mansions appointed him in two
several places out of this church's possessions, one in Pilton,
the other in the village called Poelt, that, when coming or
going, he may have a place of entertainment. Nor even
shall it be lawful for him to pass the night here unless he
shall be detained by stress of weather or bodily sickness, or
invited by the abbat or monks, and then with not more than
three or four clerks. Moreover let the aforesaid bishop be
mindful every year, with his clerks that are at Wells, to
acknowledge his mother church of Glastonbury with litanies
on the second day after our Lord's ascension; and should he
haughtily defer it, or fail in the things which are above re-
cited and confirmed, he shall forfeit his mansions above men-
tioned. The abbat or monks shall direct whom they please,
celebrating Easter canonically, to perform service in the
church of Glastonbury, its dependent churches, and in their
chapels. Whosoever, be he, of what dignity, profession, or
degree, he may, shall hereafter, on any occasion whatsoever, attempt to pervert, or nullify this, the witness of my munificence and liberality, let him be aware that, with the traitor Judas, he shall perish, to his eternal confusion, in the devouring flames of unspeakable torments. The charter of this donation was written in the year of our Lord's incarnation 725, the fourteenth of the indiction, in the presence of the king Ina, and of Berthwald, archbishop of Canterbury."

What splendour he [Ina] added to the monastery, may be collected from the short treatise which I have written about its antiquities.* Father Aldhelm assisted the design, and his precepts were heard with humility, nobly adopted, and joyfully carried into effect. Lastly, the king readily confirmed the privilege which Aldhelm had obtained from pope Sergius, for the immunity of his monasteries; gave much to the servants of God by his advice, and finally honoured him, though constantly refusing, with a bishopric; but an early death malignantly cut off this great man from the world. For scarcely had he discharged the offices of his bishopric four years, ere he made his soul an offering to heaven, in the year of our Lord's incarnation 709, on the vigil of St. Augustine the apostle of the Angles, namely the eighth before the Kalends of June.† Some say, that he was the nephew of the king, by his brother Kenten; but I do not choose to assert for truth any thing which savours more of vague opinion, than of historic credibility; especially as I can find no ancient record of it, and the Chronicle clearly declares, that Ina had no other brother than Ingild, who died some few years before him. Aldhelm needs no support from fiction: such great things are there concerning him of indisputable truth, so many which are beyond the reach of doubt. The sisters, indeed, of Ina were Cuthburga and Cwenburga. Cuthburga was given in marriage to Alfrid, king of the Northumbrians, but the contract being soon after dissolved, she led a life dedicated to God, first at Barking,‡ under the abess Hildelitha, and afterwards as superior of the convent at Wimborne; now a mean village, but formerly celebrated

* The Antiquities of Glastonbury were published about the same time by Gale, vol. iii. and by Hearne.
† The 25th of May.
‡ Bede, Eccl. Hist. b. iv. c. 7—10.
for containing a full company of virgins, dead to earthly desires, and breathing only aspirations towards heaven. She embraced the profession of holy celibacy from the perusal of Aldhelm's books on virginity, dedicated indeed to the sisterhood of Barking, but profitable to all, who aspire to that state. Ina's queen was Ethelberga, a woman of royal race and disposition: who perpetually urging the necessity of bidding adieu to earthly things, at least in the close of life, and the king as constantly deferring the execution of her advice, at last endeavoured to overcome him by stratagem. For, on a certain occasion, when they had been revelling at a country seat with more than usual riot and luxury, the next day, after their departure, an attendant, with the privy of the queen, defiled the palace in every possible manner, both with the excrement of cattle and heaps of filth; and lastly he put a sow, which had recently farrowed, in the very bed where they had lain. They had hardly proceeded a mile, ere she attacked her husband with the fondest conjugal endearments, entreatling that they might immediately return thither, whence they had departed, saying, that his denial would be attended with dangerous consequences. Her petition being readily granted, the king was astonished at seeing a place, which yesterday might have vied with Assyrian luxury, now filthily disgusting and desolate: and silently pondering on the sight, his eyes at length turned upon the queen. Seizing the opportunity, and pleasantly smiling, she said, "My noble spouse, where are the revellings of yesterday? Where the tapestries dipped in Sidonian dyes? Where the ceaseless impertinence of parasites? Where the sculptured vessels, overwhelming the very tables with their weight of gold? Where are the delicacies so anxiously sought throughout sea and land, to pamper the appetite? Are not all these things smoke and vapour? Have they not all passed away? Woe be to those who attach themselves to such, for they in like manner shall consume away. Are not all these like a rapid river hastening to the sea? And woe to those who are attached to them, for they shall be carried away by the current. Reflect, I entreat you, how wretchedly will these bodies decay, which we pamper with such unbounded luxury. Must not we, who gorge so constantly, become more disgustingly putrid? The mighty
must undergo mightier torments, and a severer trial awaits the strong." Without saying more, by this striking example, she gained over her husband to those sentiments, which she had in vain attempted for years by persuasion.*

For after his triumphal spoils in war; after many successive degrees in virtue, he aspired to the highest perfection, and went to Rome. There, not to make the glory of his conversion public, but that he might be acceptable in the sight of God alone, he was shorn in secret; and, clad in homely garb, grew old in privacy. Nor did his queen, the author of this noble deed, desert him; but as she had before incited him to undertake it, so, afterwards, she made it her constant care to soothe his sorrows by her conversation, to stimulate him, when wavering, by her example; in short, to omit nothing that could be conducive to his salvation. Thus united in mutual affection, in due time they trod the common path of all mankind. This was attended, as we have heard, with singular miracles, such as God often deigns to bestow on the virtues of happy couples.

To the government succeeded Ethelard, the cousin of Ina; though Oswald, a youth of royal extraction, often obscured his opening prospects. Exciting his countrypeople to rebellion, he attempted to make war on the king, but soon after perishing by some unhappy doom, Ethelard kept quiet possession of the kingdom for fourteen years, and then left it to his kinsman, Cuthred, who for an equal space of time, and with similar courage, was ever actively employed:—

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I, Cuthred, king of the West Saxons, do hereby declare that all the gifts of former kings—Kentwin, Baldred, Kedwall, Ina, Ethelard, and Ethbald king of the Mercians, in country houses, and in villages and lands, and farms, and mansions, according to the confirmations made to the ancient city of Glastonbury, and confirmed by autograph and by the sign of the cross, I do, as was before said, hereby decree that this grant of former kings shall remain firm and inviolate, as long as the revolution of the pole shall carry the lands and seas with regular move-

* All this passage, from "What splendour, p. 35, to persuasion," is omitted in some MSS., and is given in a note by Hardy and Sharpe; but it seems almost necessary to the context.
ment round the starry heavens. But if any one, confiding in tyrannical pride shall endeavour on any occasion to disturb and nullify this my testamentary grant, may he be separated by the fan of the last judgment from the congregation of the righteous, and joined to the assembly of the wicked for ever, paying the penalty of his violence. But whoever with benevolent intention shall strive to approve, confirm, and defend this my grant, may he be allowed to enjoy unfailing immortality before the glory of Him that sitteth on the throne, together with the happy companies of angels and of all the saints. A copy of this grant was set forth in presence of king Cuthred, in the aforesaid monastery, and dedicated to the holy altar by the munificence of his own hand, in the wooden church, where the brethren placed the coffin of abbat Hemgils, the 30th of April, in the year of our Lord 745."

The same Cuthred, after much toil, made a successful campaign against Ethelbald, king of Mercia, and the Britons, and gave up the sovereignty after he had held it fourteen years.

Sigebert then seized on the kingdom; a man of inhuman cruelty among his own subjects, and noted for cowardice abroad; but the common detestation of all conspiring against him, he was within a year driven from the throne, and gave place to one more worthy. Yet, as commonly happens in similar cases, the severity of his misfortunes brought back some persons to his cause, and the province which is called Hampshire, was, by their exertions, retained in subjection to him. Still, however, unable to quit his former habits, and exciting the enmity of all against him by the murder of one Cumbran, who had adhered to him with unshaken fidelity, he fled to the recesses of wild beasts. Misfortune still attending him thither also, he was stabbed by a swineherd. Thus the cruelty of a king, which had almost desolated the higher ranks, was put an end to by a man of the lowest condition.

Cynewolf next undertook the guidance of the state; illustrious for the regulation of his conduct and his deeds in arms; but suffering extremely from the loss of a single battle, in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, against Offa, king of the Mercians, near Bensington, he was also finally doomed to a disgraceful death. For after he had reigned thirty-one
years, * neither indolently nor oppressively, either elated with success, because he imagined nothing could oppose him, or alarmed for his posterity, from the increasing power of Kineard, the brother of Sigebert, he compelled him to quit the kingdom. Kineard, deeming it necessary to yield to the emergency of the times, departed as if voluntarily; but soon after, when by secret meetings he had assembled a desperate band of wretches, watching when the king might be alone, he had gone into the country for the sake of recreation, he followed him thither with his party. And learning that he was there giving loose to improper desires, he beset the house on all sides. The king struck with his perilous situation, and holding a conference with the persons present, shut fast the doors, expecting either to appease the desperadoes by fair language, or to terrify them by threats. When neither succeeded, he rushed furiously on Kineard, and had nearly killed him; but, surrounded by the multitude, and thinking it derogatory to his courage to give way, he fell, selling his life nobly. Some few of his attendants, who, instead of yielding, attempted to take vengeance for the loss of their lord, were slain. The report of this dreadful outrage soon reached the ears of the nobles, who were waiting near at hand. Of these Esric, the chief in age and prudence, conjuring the rest not to leave unrevenge the death of their sovereign to their own signal and eternal ignominy, rushed with drawn sword upon the conspirators. At first Kineard attempted to argue his case; to make tempting offers; to hold forth their relationship; but when this availed nothing, he stimulated his party to resistance. Doubtful was the conflict, where one side contended with all its powers for life, the other for glory. And victory, wavering for a long time, at last decided for the juster cause. Thus, fruitlessly valiant, this unhappy man lost his life, unable long to boast the success of his treachery. The king's body was buried at Winchester, and the prince's at Repton; at that time a noble monastery, but at present, as I have heard, with few, or scarcely any inmates.

* Malmesbury here perpetuates the error of the transcriber of the Saxon Chronicle, in assigning thirty-one years to Cynewolf, for as he came to the throne in 756, and was killed in 784, consequently he reigned about twenty-nine years. Perhaps he wrote, correctly, "uno de triginta annis," conjectures Mr. Hardy.
After him, for sixteen years, reigned Bertric: more studious of peace than of war. Skilful in conciliating friendship, affable with foreigners, and giving great allowances to his subjects, in those matters at least which could not impair the strength of the government. To acquire still greater estimation with his neighbours, he married the daughter of Offa, king of Mercia, at that time all-powerful; by whom, as far as I am acquainted, he had no issue. Supported by this alliance he compelled Egbert, the sole survivor of the royal stock, and whom he feared as the most effectual obstacle to his power, to fly into France. In fact Bertric himself, and the other kings, after Ina, though glorying in the splendour of their parentage, as deriving their origin from Cerdic, had considerably deviated from the direct line of the royal race. On Egbert’s expulsion, then, he had already begun to indulge in indolent security, when a piratical tribe of the Danes, accustomed to live by plunder, clandestinely arriving in three ships, disturbed the tranquillity of the kingdom. This band came over expressly to ascertain the fruitfulness of the soil, and the courage of the inhabitants, as was afterwards discovered by the arrival of that multitude, which over-ran almost the whole of Britain. Landing then, unexpectedly, when the kingdom was in a state of profound peace, they seized upon a royal village, which was nearest them, and killed the superintendent, who had advanced with succours; but losing their booty, through fear of the people, who hastened to attack them, they retired to their ships. After Bertric, who was buried at Warham, Egbert ascended the throne of his ancestors; justly to be preferred to all the kings who preceded him. Thus having brought down our narrative to his times, we must, as we have promised, next give our attention to the Northumbrians.

CHAP. III.

Of the kings of the Northumbrians. [A.D. 450.]

We have before related briefly, and now necessarily repeat, that Hengist, having settled his own government in Kent, had sent his brother Otha, and his son Ebussa, men of activity and tried experience, to seize on the northern parts of Britain. Sedulous in executing the command, affairs
succeeded to their wishes. For frequently coming into action with the inhabitants, and dispersing those who attempted resistance, they conciliated with uninterrupted quiet such as submitted. Thus, though through their own address and the good will of their followers, they had established a certain degree of power, yet never entertaining an idea of assuming the royal title, they left an example of similar moderation to their immediate posterity. For during the space of ninety-nine years, the Northumbrian leaders, contented with subordinate power, lived in subjection to the kings of Kent. Afterwards, however, this forbearance ceased; either because the human mind is ever prone to degeneracy, or because that race of people was naturally ambitious. In the year, therefore, of our Lord's incarnation 547, the sixtieth after Hengist's death, the principality was converted into a kingdom. The most noble Ida, in the full vigour of life and of strength, first reigned there. But whether he himself seized the chief authority, or received it by the consent of others, I by no means venture to determine, because the truth is unrevealed. However, it is sufficiently evident, that, sprung from a great and ancient lineage, he reflected much splendour on his illustrious descent, by his pure and unsullied manners. Unconquerable abroad, at home he tempered his kingly power with peculiar affability. Of this man, and of others, in their respective places, I could lineally trace the descent, were it not that the very names, of uncouth sound, would be less agreeable to my readers than I wish. It may be proper though to remark, that Woden had three sons; Weldeg, Withleg, and Beldeg; from the first, the kings of Kent derived their origin; from the second, the kings of Mercia; and from the third, the kings of the West-Saxons and Northumbrians, with the exception of the two I am going to particularize. This Ida, then, the ninth from Beldeg, and the tenth from Woden, as I find positively declared, continued in the government fourteen years.

His successor Alla, originating from the same stock, but descending from Woden by a different branch, conducted the government, extended by his exertions considerably beyond its former bounds, for thirty years. In his time, youths from Northumbria were exposed for sale, after the common and
almost native custom of this people; so that, even as our
days have witnessed, they would make no scruple of
separating the nearest ties of relationship through the
temptation of the slightest advantage. Some of these youths
then, carried from England for sale to Rome, became the
means of salvation to all their countrymen. For exciting
the attention of that city, by the beauty of their countenances
and the elegance of their features, it happened that, among
others, the blessed Gregory, at that time archdeacon of the
apostolical see, was present. Admiring such an assemblage
of grace in mortals, and, at the same time, pitying their
abject condition, as captives, he asked the standers-by, "of
what race are these? Whence come they?" They reply, "by
birth they are Angles; by country are Deiri; (Deira being
a province of Northumbria,) subjects of King Alla, and
Pagans." Their concluding characteristic he accompanied
with heartfelt sighs: to the others he elegantly alluded,
saying, "that these Angles, angel-like, should be delivered
from (de) ira, and taught to sing Alle-luia." Obtaining
permission without delay from pope Benedict, the industry
of this excellent man was all alive to enter on the journey to
convert them; and certainly his zeal would have completed
this intended labour, had not the mutinous love of his
fellow citizens recalled him, already on his progress. He
was a man as celebrated for his virtues, as beloved by his
countrymen; for by his matchless worth, he had even
exceeded the expectations they had formed of him from his
youth. His good intention, though frustrated at this time,
received afterwards, during his pontificate, an honourable
termination, as the reader will find in its proper place. I
have made this insertion with pleasure, that my readers
might not lose this notice of Alla, mention of whom is
slightly made in the life of Pope Gregory, who, although he
was the primary cause of introducing Christianity among
the Angles, yet, either by the counsel of God, or some
mischance, was never himself permitted to know it. The
calling, indeed, descended to his son.

On the death of Alla, Ethelric, the son of Ida, advanced
to extreme old age, after a life consumed in penury, obtained
the kingdom, and after five years, was taken off by a sudden
death. He was a pitiable prince, whom fame would have
hidden in obscurity, had not the conspicuous energy of the son lifted up the father to notice.

When, therefore, by a long old age, he had satisfied the desire of life, Ethelfrid, the elder of his sons, ascended the throne, and compensated the greenness of his years by the maturity of his conduct. His transactions have been so displayed by graceful composition, that they want no assistance of mine, except as order is concerned. Bede has eagerly dwelt on the praises of this man and his successors; and has dilated on the Northumbrians at greater length, because they were his near neighbours: our history, therefore, will select and compile from his relation. In order, however, that no one may blame me for contracting so diffuse a narrative, I must tell him that I have done it purposely, that they who have been satiated with such high-seasoned delicacies, may respire a little on these humble remnants: for it is a saying trite by use and venerable for its age, "that the meats which cloy the least are eaten with keenest appetite." Ethelfrid then, as I was relating, having obtained the kingdom, began at first vigorously to defend his own territories, afterwards eagerly to invade his neighbours, and to seek occasion for signalizing himself on all sides. Many wars were begun by him with foresight, and terminated with success; as he was neither restrained from duty by indolence, nor precipitated into rashness by courage. An evidence of these things is Degstan,* a noted place in those parts, where Edan, king of the Scots, envying Ethelfrid's successes, had constrained him, though averse, to give battle; but, being overcome, he took to flight, though the triumph was not obtained without considerable hazard to the victor. For Tedbald, the brother of Ethelfrid, opposing himself to the most imminent dangers that he might display his zeal in his brother's cause, left a mournful victory indeed, being cut off with his whole party. Another proof of his success is afforded by the city of Carl- legion, now commonly called Chester, which, till that period possessed by the Britons, fostered the pride of a people hostile to the king. When he bent his exertions to subdue this city, the townsmen preferring any extremity to a siege, and at the same confiding in their numbers, rushed out in multitudes to battle. But deceived by a stratagem, they were

* Supposed Dalston near Carlisle, or Dawston near Ichborough
overcome and put to flight; his fury being first vented on the monks, who came out in numbers to pray for the safety of the army. That their number was incredible to these times is apparent from so many half-destroyed walls of churches in the neighbouring monastery, so many winding porticoes, such masses of ruins as can scarcely be seen elsewhere. The place is called Bangor; at that day a noted monastery, but now changed into a cathedral.* Ethelfrid, thus, while circumstances proceeded to his wishes abroad, being desirous of warding off domestic apprehensions and intestine danger, banished Edwin, the son of Alla, a youth of no mean worth, from his kingdom and country. He, wandering for a long time without any settled habitation, found many of his former friends more inclined to his enemy than to the observance of their engagements; for as it is said,

"If joy be thine, 'tis then thy friends abound; Misfortune comes, and thou alone art found."†

At last he came to Redwald, king of the East Angles, and bewailing his misfortunes, was received into his protection. Shortly after there came messengers from Ethelfrid, either demanding the surrender of the fugitive, or denouncing hostilities. Determined by the advice of his wife not to violate, through intimidation, the laws of friendship, Redwald collected a body of troops, rushed against Ethelfrid, and attacked him suddenly, whilst suspecting nothing less than an assault. The only remedy that courage, thus taken by surprise, could suggest, there being no time to escape, he availed himself of. Wherefore, though almost totally unprepared, though beset with fearful danger on every side, he fell not till he had avenged his own death by the destruction of Regnhere, the son of Redwald. Such an end had Ethelfrid, after a reign of twenty-four years: a man second to none in martial experience, but entirely ignorant of the holy faith. He had two sons by Acca, the daughter of Alla, sister of Edwin, Oswald aged twelve, and Oswy four years; who, upon the death of their father, fled through the management of their governors, and escaped into Scotland.

* Malmesbury here confounds the ancient monastery of Banchor, near Chester, with the more modern see of Bangor in Carnarvonshire.
† Ovid. Trist. 1. 9, v. 5
In this manner, all his rivals being slain or banished, Edwin, trained by many adversities, ascended, not mealy qualified, the summit of power. When the haughtiness of the Northumbrians had bent to his dominion, his felicity was crowned by the timely death of Redwald, whose subjects, during Edwin's exile among them, having formerly experienced his ready courage and ardent disposition, now willingly swore obedience to him. Granting to the son of Redwald the empty title of king, himself managed all things as he thought fit. At this juncture, the hopes and the resources of the Angles centred totally in him; nor was there a single province of Britain which did not regard his will, and prepare to obey it, except Kent: for he had left the Kentish people free from his incursions, because he had long meditated a marriage with Ethelburga, sister of their king. When she was granted to him, after a courtship long protracted, to the intent that he should not despise that woman when possessed whom he so ardently desired when withheld, these two kingdoms became so united by the ties of kindred, that, there was no rivalry in their powers, no difference in their manners. Moreover, on this occasion, the faith of Christ our Lord, infused into those parts by the preaching of Paulinus, reached first the king himself, whom the queen, among other proofs of conjugal affection, was perpetually instructing; nor was the admonition of bishop Paulinus wanting in its place. For a long time, he was wavering and doubtful; but once received, he imbibed it altogether. Then he invited neighbouring kings to the faith; then he erected churches, and neglected nothing for its propagation. In the meanwhile, the merciful grace of God smiled on the devotion of the king; insomuch, that not only the nations of Britain, that is to say, the Angles, Scots, and Picts, but even the Orkney and Mevanian isles, which we now call Anglesey, that is, islands of the Angles, both feared his arms, and venerated his power. At that time, there was no public robber; no domestic thief; the tempter of conjugal fidelity was far distant; the plunderer of another man's inheritance was in exile: a state of things redounding to his praise, and worthy of celebration in our times. In short, such was the increase of his power, that justice and peace willingly met and kissed each other, imparting mutual acts of kindness.
And now indeed would the government of the Angles have held a prosperous course, had not an untimely death, the stepmother of all earthly felicity, by a lamentable turn of fortune, snatched this man from his country. For in the forty-eighth year of his age, and the seventeenth of his reign, being killed, together with his son, by the princes whom he had formerly subjugated, Cadwalla of the Britons and Penda of the Mercians, rising up against him, he became a melancholy example of human vicissitude. He was inferior to none in prudence: for he would not embrace even the Christian faith till he had examined it most carefully; but when once adopted, he esteemed nothing worthy to be compared to it.

Edwin thus slain, the sons of Ethelfrid, who were also the nephews of Edwin, Oswald, and Oswy, now grown up, and in the budding prime of youth, re-sought their country, together with Eanfrid, their elder brother, whom I forgot before to mention. The kingdom, therefore, was now divided into two. Indeed, Northumbria, long since separated into two provinces, had elected Alla, king of the Deirans, and Ida, of the Bernicians. Wherefore Osric, the cousin of Edwin, succeeding to Deira, and Eanfrid, the son of Ethelfrid, to Bernicia, they exulted in the recovery of their hereditary right. They had both been baptized in Scotland, though they were scarcely settled in their authority, ere they renounced their faith: but shortly after they suffered the just penalty of their apostacy through the hostility of Cadwalla. The space of a year, passed in these transactions, improved Oswald, a young man of great hope, in the science of government. Armed rather by his faith, for he had been admitted to baptism while in exile with many nobles among the Scots, than by his military preparations, on the first onset he drove Cadwalla,* a man elated with the recollection of his former deeds, and, as he used himself to say, “born for the extermination of the Angles,” from his camp, and afterwards destroyed him with all his forces. For when he had collected the little army which he was able to muster, he excited them to the conflict, in which, laying aside all thought of flight, they must determine either to conquer or die, by suggesting,

Cadwalla, king of the Britons, having slain Eanfrid and Osric, A.D. 634, had usurped the government of Northumbria.
"that it must be a circumstance highly disgraceful for the Angles to meet the Britons on such unequal terms, as to fight against those persons for safety, whom they had been used voluntarily to attack for glory only; that therefore they should maintain their liberty with dauntless courage, and the most strenuous exertions; but, that of the impulse to flight no feeling whatever should be indulged." In consequence they met with such fury on both sides, that, it may be truly said, no day was ever more disastrous for the Britons, or more joyful for the Angles: so completely was one party routed with all its forces, as never to have hope of recovering again; so exceedingly powerful did the other become, through the effects of faith and the accompanying courage of the king. From this time, the worship of idols fell prostrate in the dust; and he governed the kingdom, extended beyond Edwin's boundaries, for eight years, peacefully and without the loss of any of his people. Bede, in his History, sets forth the praises of this king in a high style of panegyrick, of which I shall extract such portions as may be necessary, by way of conclusion. With what fervent faith his breast was inspired, may easily be learned from this circumstance. If at any time Aidan the priest addressed his auditors on the subject of their duty, in the Scottish tongue, and no interpreter was present, the king himself would directly, though habited in the royal robe, glittering with gold, or glowing with Tyrian purple, graciously assume that office, and explain the foreign idiom in his native language. It is well known too, that frequently at entertainments, when the guests had whetted their appetites and bent their inclinations on the feast, he would forego his own gratification; procuring, by his abstinence, comfort for the poor. So that I think the truth of that heavenly sentence was fulfilled even on earth, where the celestial oracle hath said, "He that dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth for ever." And moreover, what the hearer must wonder at, and cannot deny, that identical royal right hand,

* When he was seated at table and just about to commence dinner, the royal almoner informed the king that a great number of poor were assembled in the street, asking relief; on which he immediately ordered the whole of the provisions to be distributed, and the silver dish also to be cut into pieces, and divided amongst them. See Bede, b. iii. c. 6.
the dispenser of so many alms, remains to this day perfect, with the arm, the skin and nerves, though the remainder of the body, with the exception of the bones, mouldering into dust, has not escaped the common lot of mortality. It is true the corporeal remains of some of the saints are unconscious altogether of decay. Wherefore let others determine by what standard they will fix their judgment; I pronounce this still more gracious and divine on account of its singular manifestation; because things ever so precious degenerate by frequency, and whatever is more unusual, is celebrated more generally. I should indeed be thought prolix were I to relate how diligent he was to address his prayers on high, and to fill the heavens with vows. This virtue of Oswald is too well known to require the support of our narrative. For at what time would that man neglect his supplications, who, in the inscription excited by Penda king of the Mercians, his guards being put to flight and himself actually carrying a forest of darts in his breast, could not be prevented by the pain of his wounds or the approach of death, from praying for the souls of his faithful companions? In such manner this personage, of surpassing celebrity in this world, and highly in favour with God, ending a valuable life, transmitted his memory to posterity by a frequency of miracles; and indeed most deservedly. For it is not common, but even more rare than a white crow, for men to abound in riches, and not give indulgence to their vices.*

When he was slain, his arms with the hands and his head were cut off by the insatiable rage of his conqueror, and fixed on a stake. The dead trunk indeed, as I have mentioned, being laid to rest in the calm bosom of the earth, turned to its native dust; but the arms and hands, through the power of God, remain, according to the testimony of an author of veracity, without corruption. These being placed by his brother Oswy in a shrine, at the city of Bebbanburg,† so the Angles call it, and shown for a miracle, bear testimony to the fact. Whether they remain at that place at the present day, I venture not rashly to affirm, because I waver in my opinion. If other historians have precipitately recorded any matter, let them be accountable: I hold common report

† Bambrough in Northumberland. Bede iii. 6, p. 118.
at a cheaper rate, and affirm nothing but what is deserving of entire credit. The head was then buried by his before-mentioned brother at Lindisfarne; but it is said now to be preserved at Durham in the arms of the blessed Cuthbert.* When Ostritha, the wife of Ethelred, king of the Mercians, daughter of king Oswy, through regard to her uncle, was anxious to take the bones of the trunk to her monastery of Bardney, which is in the country of the Mercians not far from the city of Lincoln, the monks refused her request at first; denying repose even to the bones of that man when dead whom they had hated whilst living, because he had obtained their country by right of arms. But at midnight being taught, by a miraculous light from heaven shining on the relics, to abate their haughty pride, they became converts to reason, and even entreated as a favour, what before they had rejected. Virtues from on high became resident in this place: every sick person who implored this most excellent martyr’s assistance, immediately received it. The withering turf grew greener from his blood, and recovered a horse:† and some of it being hung up against a post, the devouring flames fled from it in their turn. Some dust, moistened from his relics, was equally efficacious in restoring a lunatic to his proper senses. The washings of the stake which had imbibed the blood fresh streaming from his head, restored health to one despairing of recovery. For a long time this monastery, possessing so great a treasure, flourished in the sanctity of its members and the abundance of its friends, more especially after king Ethelred received the tonsure there, where also his tomb is seen even to the present day. After many years indeed, when the barbarians infested these parts, the bones of the most holy Oswald were removed to Gloucester. This place, at that period inhabited by monks, but at the present time by canons, contains but few inmates. Oswald, therefore, was the man who yielded the first fruits of holiness to his nation; since no Angle be-

* St. Cuthbert is represented as holding the head of Oswald in his arms. Bede’s bones were afterwards laid in the same coffin.

† The horse lay down under his rider in great agony; but recovered by rolling on the spot and cropping the grass. A person carried away some of the earth, which he hung up against a post in the wall: the house caught fire and was burnt with the exception of the timber to which the bag was tied. See Bede, b. iii. c. 9, 10; and for the other stories, c. 13.
fore him, to my knowledge, was celebrated for miracles. For
after a life spent in sanctity, in liberally giving alms, in fre-
quent watchings and prayer, and lastly, through zeal for the
church of God, in waging war with an heathen, he poured
out his spirit, according to his wishes, before he could behold,
what was his greatest object of apprehension, the decline of
Christianity. Nor indeed shall he be denied the praise of
the martyrs, who, first aspiring after a holy life, and next
opposing his body to a glorious death, certainly trod in their
steps: in a manner he deserves higher commendation, since
they barely consecrated themselves to God; but Oswald not
only himself, but all the Northumbrians with him.

On his removal from this world, Oswy his brother
assumed the dominion over the Bernicians, as did Oswin,
the son of Osric, whom I have before mentioned, over
the Deirans. After meeting temperately at first on the
subject of the division of the provinces, under a doubtful
truce, they each retired peaceably to their territories; but
not long after, by means of persons who delighted in sowing
the seeds of discord, the peace, of which they had so often
made a mockery by ambiguous treaties, was finally broken,
and vanished into air. Horrid crime! that there should be
men who could envy these kings their friendly intimacy, nor
abstain from using their utmost efforts to precipitate them
into battle. Here then fortune, who had before so frequently
caressed Oswin with her blandishments, now wounded him
with her scorpion-sting. For thinking it prudent to abstain
from fighting, on account of the smallness of his force, he
had secretly withdrawn to a country-seat, where he was
immediately betrayed by his own people, and killed by Oswy.
He was a man admirably calculated to gain the favour of his
subjects by his pecuniary liberality; and, as they relate,
demonstrated his care for his soul by his fervent devotion.
Oswy, thus sovereign of the entire kingdom, did every thing
to wipe out this foul stain, and to increase his dignity, ex-
tenuating the enormity of that atrocious deed by the recti-
tude of his future conduct. Indeed the first and highest
point of his glory is, that he nobly avenged his brother and
his uncle, and gave to perdition Penda king of the Mercians,
that destroyer of his neighbours, and fomenter of hostility.
From this period he either governed the Mercians, as well as
almost all the Angles, himself, or was supreme over those who did. Turning from this time altogether to offices of piety, that he might be truly grateful for the favours of God perpetually flowing down upon him, he proceeded to raise up and animate, with all his power, the infancy of the Christian faith, which of late was fainting through his brother's death. This faith, brought shortly after to maturity by the learning of the Scots, but waverling in many ecclesiastical observances, was now settled on canonical foundations:* first by Agilbert and Wilfrid, and next by archbishop Theodore: for whose arrival in Britain, although Egbert, king of Kent, as far as his province is concerned, takes much from his glory, the chief thanks are due to Oswy.† Moreover he built numerous habitations for the servants of God, and so left not his country destitute of this advantage also. The principal of these monasteries, at that time for females, but now for males, was situate about thirty miles north of York, and was anciently called Streaneshalch, but latterly Whitby. Begun by Hilda, a woman of singular piety, it was augmented with large revenues by Elfrid, daughter of this king, who succeeded her in the government of it; in which place also she buried her father with all due solemnity, after he had reigned twenty-eight years. This monastery, like all others of the same order, was destroyed in the times of the Danish invasion, which will be related hereafter, and bereaved of the bodies of many saints. For the bones of St. Aidan the bishop, of Ceolfrid the abbat, and of that truly holy virgin Hilda, together with those of many others, were, as I have related in the book which I lately published on the Antiquity of the Church of Glastonbury, at that time removed to Glastonbury; and those of other saints to different places. Now the monastery, under another name, and somewhat restored as circumstances permitted, hardly presents a vestige of its former opulence.

To Oswy, who had two sons, the elder who was illegitimate being rejected, succeeded the younger, Egfrid, legitimately born, more valued on account of the good qualities of his most pious wife Ætheldrida, than for his own; yet he

* The principal points in dispute were, the time of celebrating Easter and the form of the tonsure. See Bede, Eccl. Hist. iii. 25.
† See Bede, Hist. Eccl. iii. 29.
was certainly to be commended for two things which I have read in the history of the Angles, his allowing his wife to dedicate herself to God, and his promoting the blessed Cuthbert to a bishopric, whose tears at the same time burst out with pious assent.* But my mind shudders at the bare recollection of his outrage against the holy Wilfrid, when, loathing his virtues, he deprived the country of this shining character. Overbearing towards the suppliant, a malady incident to tyrants, he overwhelmed the Irish, a race of men harmless in genuine simplicity and guiltless of every crime, with incredible slaughter. On the other hand, inactive towards the rebellious, and not following up the triumphs of his father, he lost the dominion of the Mercians, and moreover, defeated in battle by Ethelred the son of Penda, their king, he lost his brother also. Perhaps these last circumstances may be truly attributed to the unsteadiness of youth, but his conduct towards Wilfrid, to the instigation of his wife,† and of the bishops; more especially as Bede, a man who knew not how to flatter, calls him, in his book of the Lives of his Abbats, the most pious man, the most beloved by God. At length, in the fifteenth year of his reign, as he was leading an expedition against the Picts, and eagerly pursuing them as they purposely retired to some secluded mountains, he perished with almost all his forces; the few who escaped by flight carried home news of the event; and yet the divine Cuthbert, from his knowledge of future events, had both attempted to keep him back, when departing, and at the very moment of his death, enlightened by heavenly influence, declared, though at a distance, that he was slain.

While a more than common report everywhere noised the death of Egfrid, an intimation of it, “borne on the wings of haste,” reached the ears of his brother Alfrid. Though the elder brother, he had been deemed, by the nobility, unwor-

* Bede's Life of St. Cuthbert, c. 24.
† Ermenburga, the second wife of Egfrid. The first, Etheldrida, was divorced from him, on account of her love of celibacy, and became a nun. Wilfrid, bishop of Hexham, was several times expelled his see. Elected bishop of York, A.D. 664, he was expelled in 678. He was recalled to Northumbria in 687, and again expelled 692. He died A.D. 709, having been reinstated by the pope. See Bede v. 19, and Sax. Chron.
thy of the government, from his illegitimacy, as I have observed, and had retired to Ireland, either through compulsion or indignation. In this place, safe from the persecution of his brother, he had, from his ample leisure, become deeply versed in literature, and had enriched his mind with every kind of learning. On which account the very persons who had formerly banished him, esteeming him the better qualified to manage the reins of government, now sent for him of their own accord. Fate rendered efficacious their entreaties; neither did he disappoint their expectations. For during the space of nineteen years, he presided over the kingdom in the utmost tranquillity and joy; doing nothing that even greedy calumny itself could justly carp at, except the persecution of that great man Wilfrid. However he held not the same extent of territory as his father and brother, because the Picts, proudly profiting by their recent victory, and attacking the Angles, who were become indolent through a lengthened peace, had curtailed his boundaries on the north.

He had for successor his son, Osred, a boy of eight years old; who disgracing the throne for eleven years, and spending an ignominious life in the seduction of nuns, was ultimately taken off by the hostility of his relations. Yet he poured out to them a draught from the same cup; for Kenred after reigning two, and Osric eleven years, left only this to be recorded of them; that they expiated by a violent death, the blood of their master, whom they supposed they had rightfully slain. Osric indeed deserved a happier end, for, as a heathen* says, he was more dignified than other shades, because, while yet living he had adopted Ceolwulf; Kenred’s brother, as his successor. Then Ceolwulf ascended the giddy height of empire, seventh in descent from Ida: a man competent in other respects, and withal possessed of a depth of literature, acquired by good abilities and indefatigable attention. Bede vouches for the truth of my assertion, who, at the very juncture when Britain most abounded with scholars, offered his History of the Angles, for correction, to this prince more especially; making choice of his authority, to confirm by his high station what had been well written; and of his learning, to rectify by his talents what might be carelessly expressed.

* Virg. Æn. vi. 815.
In the fourth year of his reign, Bede, the historian, after having written many books for the holy church, entered the heavenly kingdom, for which he had so long languished, in the year of our Lord's incarnation 734; of his age the fifty-ninth. A man whom it is easier to admire than worthily to extol: who, though born in a remote corner of the world, was able to dazzle the whole earth with the brilliancy of his learning. For even Britain, which by some is called another world, since, surrounded by the ocean, it was not thoroughly known by many geographers, possesses, in its remotest region, bordering on Scotland, the place of his birth and education. This region, formerly exhaling the grateful odour of monasteries, or glittering with a multitude of cities built by the Romans, now desolate through the ancient devastations of the Danes, or those more recent of the Normans,* presents but little to allure the mind. Here is the river Wear, of considerable breadth and rapid tide; which running into the sea, receives the vessels, borne by gentle gales, on the calm bosom of its haven. Both its banks† have been made conspicuous by one Benedict,‡ who there built churches and monasteries; one dedicated to Peter, and the other to Paul, united in the bond of brotherly love and of monastic rule. The industry and forbearance of this man, any one will admire who reads the book which Bede composed concerning his life and those of the succeeding abbats: his industry, in bringing over a multitude of books, and being the first person who introduced in England constructors of stone edifices, as well as makers of glass windows; in which pursuits he spent almost his whole life abroad: the love of his country and his taste for elegance beguiling his painful labours, in the

* The country was laid waste by the Danes, A.D. 793, and continued to be disturbed by them throughout the reigns of Alfred and Ethelred. The great devastation was made by William the Conqueror A.D. 1069.
† This is not quite correct: Jarrow, one of Benedict's monasteries, is on the river Tyne.
‡ Benedict surnamed Biscop, a noble Northumbrian, quitted the service of King Oswy, when he had attained his twenty-fifth year, and travelled to Rome five several times; occupying himself while there, either in learning the Roman ritual, or in collecting books, pictures, and ornaments of various descriptions for the monasteries he had founded at Wearmouth: he also brought over masons from France to build a church after the Roman manner; as well as artisans in glass. See Bede's Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow.
earnest desire of conveying something to his countrymen out of the common way; for very rarely before the time of Benedict were buildings of stone* seen in Britain, nor did the solar ray cast its light through the transparent glass. Again, his forbearance: for when in possession of the monastery of St. Augustine at Canterbury, he cheerfully resigned it to Adrian, when he arrived, not as fearing the severity of St. Theodore the archbishop, but bowing to his authority. And farther, while long absent abroad, he endured not only with temper, but, I may say, with magnanimity, the substitution of another abbat, without his knowledge, by the monks of Wearmouth; and on his return, admitted him to equal honour with himself, in rank and power. Moreover, when stricken so severely with the palsy that he could move none of his limbs, he appointed a third abbat, because the other, of whom we have spoken, was not less affected by the same disease. And when the disorder, increasing, was just about to seize his vitals, he bade adieu to his companion, who was brought into his presence, with an inclination of the head only; nor was he better able to return the salutation, for he was hastening to a still nearer exit, and actually died before Benedict.

Ceolfrid succeeded, under whom the affairs of the monastery flourished beyond measure. When, through extreme old age, life ceased to be desirable, he purposed going to Rome, that he might pour out, as he hoped, his aged soul an offering to the apostles his masters. But failing of the object of his desires, he paid the debt of nature at the city of Langres. The relics of his bones were in after time conveyed to his monastery; and at the period of the Danish devastation, with those of St. Hilda, were taken to Glastonbury.† The merits of these abbats, sufficiently eminent in

* "... lapidei tabulatus," this seems intended to designate buildings with courses of stone in a regular manner, which is also implied by him, De Gестis Pontif. lib. iii. f. 148. Bede, whom he here follows, affords no assistance as to the precise meaning; he merely states, that Benedict caused a church to be erected after the Roman model.

† The monks of Glastonbury used all possible means to obtain relics of saints. See the curious account of a contention concerning the body of St. Dunstan, which those monks asserted they had stolen from Canterbury, after it had been burnt by the Danes, in the time of Ethelred, in Wharton Anglia Sacra, vol. ii. p. 222.
themselves, their celebrated pupil, Bede, crowns with superior splendour. It is written indeed, "A wise son is the glory of his father:" for one of them made him a monk, the other educated him. And since Bede himself has given some slight notices of these facts, comprising his whole life in a kind of summary, it may be allowed to turn to his words, which the reader will recognize, lest any variation of the style should affect the relation. At the end then of the Ecclesiastical History of the English* this man, as praiseworthy in other respects as in this, that he withheld nothing from posterity, though it might be only a trifling knowledge of himself, says thus:

"I, Bede, the servant of Christ, and priest of the monastery of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, which is at Wearmouth, have, by God's assistance, arranged these materials for the history of Britain. I was born within the possessions of this monastery, and at seven years of age, was committed, by the care of my relations, to the most reverend abbot Benedict, to be educated, and, after, to Ceolfrid; passing the remainder of my life from that period in residence at the said monastery, I have given up my whole attention to the study of the Scriptures, and amid the observance of my regular discipline and my daily duty of singing in the church, have ever delighted to learn, to teach, or to write. In the nineteenth year of my life, I took deacon's, in the thirtieth, priest's orders; both, at the instance of abbot Ceolfrid, by the ministry of the most reverend bishop John:† from which time of receiving the priesthood till the fifty-ninth year of my age, I have been employed for the benefit of myself or of my friends, in making these extracts from the works of the venerable fathers, or in making additions, according to the form of their sense or interpretation." Then enumerating thirty-six volumes which he published in seventy-eight books, he proceeds, "And I pray most earnestly, O merciful Jesus, that thou wouldst grant me, to whom thou hast already given theknowledge of thyself, finally to come to thee, the fountain of all wisdom, and to appear for ever in thy presence. Moreover I humbly entreat all persons,

† John of Beverley, bishop of Hexham, A.D. 686. He was made bishop of York, A.D. 705, and died 7th of May, 722. See Bede, b. v. c. 2—6.
whether readers or hearers, whom this history of our nation shall reach, that they be mindful to intercede with the divine clemency for my infirmities both of mind and of body, and that, in their several provinces, they make me this grateful return; that I, who have diligently laboured to record, of every province, or of more exalted places, what appeared worthy of preservation or agreeable to the inhabitants, may receive, from all, the benefit of their pious intercessions."

Here my abilities fail, here my eloquence falls short: ignorant which to praise most, the number of his writings, or the gravity of his style. No doubt he had imbibed a large portion of heavenly wisdom, to be able to compose so many volumes within the limits of so short a life. Nay, they even report, that he went to Rome for the purpose either of personally asserting that his writings were consistent with the doctrines of the church; or of correcting them by apostolical authority, should they be found repugnant thereto. That he went to Rome I do not however affirm for fact: but I have no doubt in declaring that he was invited thither, as the following epistle will certify; as well as that the see of Rome so highly esteemed him as greatly to desire his presence.

"Sergius the bishop, servant of the servants of God, to Ceolfrid the holy abbat sendeth greeting:—

"With what words, and in what manner, can we declare the kindness and unspeakable providence of our God, and return fit thanks for his boundless benefits, who leads us, when placed in darkness, and the shadow of death, to the light of knowledge?" And below, "Know, that we received the favour of the offering which your devout piety hath sent by the present bearer, with the same joy and goodwill with which it was transmitted. We assent to the timely and becoming prayers of your laudable anxiety with deepest regard, and entreat of your pious goodness, so acceptable to God, that, since there have occurred certain points of ecclesiastical discipline, not to be promulgated without farther examination, which have made it necessary for us to confer with a person skilled in literature, as becomes an assistant of God's holy universal mother-church, you would not delay paying ready obedience to this, our admonition; but would send without loss of time, to our lowly presence, at the church of
the chief apostles, my lords Peter and Paul, your friends and protectors, that religious servant of God, Bede, the venerable priest of your monastery; whom, God willing, you may expect to return in safety, when the necessary discussion of the above-mentioned points shall be, by God’s assistance, solemnly completed: for whatever may be added to the church at large, by his assistance, will, we trust, be profitable to the things committed to your immediate care.”

So extensive was his fame then, that even the majesty of Rome itself solicited his assistance in solving abstruse questions, nor did Gallic conceit ever find in this Angle any thing justly to blame. All the western world yielded the palm to his faith and authority; for indeed he was of sound faith, and of artless, yet pleasing eloquence: in all elucidations of the holy scriptures, discussing those points from which the reader might imbibe the love of God, and of his neighbour, rather than those which might charm by their wit, or polish a rugged style. Moreover the irrerefragable truth of that sentence, which the majesty of divine wisdom proclaimed to the world forbids any one to doubt the sanctity of his life, “Wisdom will not enter the malevolent soul, nor dwell in the person of the sinful;” which indeed is said not of earthly wisdom, which is infused promiscuously into the hearts of men, and in which, even the wicked, who continue their crimes until their last day, seem often to excel, according to the divine expression, “The sons of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light;” but it rather describes that wisdom which needs not the assistance of learning, and which dismisses from its cogitations those things which are void of understanding, that is to say, of the understanding of acting and speaking properly. Hence Seneca in his book, “De Causis,”* appositely relates that Cato, defining the duty of an orator, said, “An orator is a good man, skilled in speaking.” This ecclesiastical orator, then, used to purify his knowledge, that so he might, as far as possible, unveil the meaning of mystic writings. How indeed could that man be enslaved to vice who gave his whole soul and spirit to elucidate the scriptures? For, as he confesses in his third book on Samuel, if his explications were productive of no advantage to his readers, yet were they of con-

*Seneca, Controvers. lib. 1.
siderable importance to himself, inasmuch as, while fully in-
tent upon them, he escaped the vanity and empty imagina-
tions of the times. Purified from vice, therefore, he entered
within the inner veil, divulging in pure diction the senti-
ments of his mind.

But the unspotted sanctity and holy purity of his heart
were chiefly conspicuous on the approach of death. Although
for seven weeks successively, from the indisposition of his
stomach, he nauseated all food, and was troubled with such a
difficulty of breathing that his disorder confined him to his
bed, yet he by no means abandoned his literary avocations.
During whole days he endeavoured to mitigate the pressure
of his disorder and to lose the recollection of it by constant
lectures to his pupils, and by examining and solving abstruse
questions, in addition to his usual task of psalmody. More-
over the gospel of St. John, which from its difficulty exer-
cises the talents of its readers even to the present day, was
translated by him into the English language, and accommo-
dated to those who did not understand Latin. Occasionally,
also, would he admonish his disciples, saying, "Learn, my
children, while I am with you, for I know not how long I
shall continue; and although my Maker should very shortly
take me hence, and my spirit should return to him that sent
and granted it to come into this life, yet have I lived long,
God hath rightly appointed my portion of days, I desire to
be dissolved and to be with Christ."

Often too when the balance was poised between hope and
fear, he would remark "It is a fearful thing to fall into the
hands of the living God.* I have not passed my life among
you in such manner as to be ashamed to live, neither do I
fear to die, because we have a kind Master;" thus borrowing
the expression of St. Ambrose when dying. Happy man!
who could speak with so quiet a conscience as neither being
ashamed to live, nor afraid to die; on the one hand not fear-
ing the judgment of men, on the other waiting with com-
posure the hidden will of God. Often, when urged by ex-
tremity of pain, he comforted himself with these remarks,
"The furnace tries the gold, and the fire of temptation the
just man: the sufferings of this present time are not worthy

* Hebrews x. 31.
to be compared to the future glory which shall be revealed in
us.”* Tears and a difficulty of breathing accompanied his
words. At night, when there were none to be instructed or
to note down his remarks, he passed the whole season in
giving thanks and singing psalms, fulfilling the saying of
that very wise man,† “that he was never less alone than when
alone.” If at any time a short and disturbed sleep stole upon
his eye-lids, he immediately shook it off, and showed that his
affections were always intent on God, by exclaiming “Lift
me up, O Lord, that the proud calumnieate me not. Do with
thy servant according to thy mercy.” These and similar ex-
pressions which his shattered memory suggested, flowed
spontaneously from his lips whenever the pain of his agoniz-
ing disorder became mitigated. But on the Tuesday before
our Lord’s ascension his disease rapidly increased, and there
appeared a small swelling in his feet, the sure and certain
indication of approaching death. Then the congregation
being called together, he was anointed and received the sacra-
ment. Kissing them all, and requesting from each that they
would bear him in remembrance, he gave a small present,
which he had privately reserved, to some with whom he had
been in closer bonds of friendship. On Ascension day, when
his soul, tired of the frail occupation of the body, panted to
be free, lying down on a hair-cloth near the oratory, where
he used to pray, with sense unimpaired and joyful counte-
nance, he invited the grace of the Holy Spirit, saying, “O
King of glory, Lord of virtue, who ascendedst this day triump-
phant into the heavens, leave us not destitute, but send upon
us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth.” This
prayer ended, he breathed his last, and immediately the senses
of all were pervaded by an odour such as neither cinnamon
nor balm could give, but coming, as it were, from paradise,
and fraught with all the joyous exhalations of spring. At
that time he was buried in the same monastery, but at pre-
sent, report asserts that he lies at Durham with St. Cuthbert.

With this man was buried almost all knowledge of history
down to our times, inasmuch as there has been no English-

* Romans viii. 18.
† Scipio Africanus was accustomed to observe, “that he was never less idle than when unoccupied, nor never less alone than when by himself.”
Cicero de Offic. 1. 3.
man either emulous of his pursuits, or a follower of his graces, who could continue the thread of his discourse, now broken short. Some few indeed, "whom the mild Jesus loved," though well skilled in literature, have yet observed an ungracious silence throughout their lives; others, scarcely tasting of the stream, have fostered a criminal indolence. Thus to the slothful succeeded others more slothful still, and the warmth of science for a long time decreased throughout the island. The verses of his epitaph will afford sufficient specimen of this indolence; they are indeed contemptible, and unworthy the tomb of so great a man:

"Presbyter hic Beda, requiescit carne sepultus;
Dona, Christe, animam in celis gaudere per sævum:
Daque illi sophiæ debriari fonte, cui jam
Suspiravit ovans, intento semper amore."*

Can this disgrace be extenuated by any excuse, that there was not to be found even in that monastery, where during his lifetime the school of all learning had flourished, a single person who could write his epitaph, except in this mean and paltry style? But enough of this: I will return to my subject.

Ceolwulf thinking it beneath the dignity of a Christian to be immersed in earthly things, abdicated the throne after a reign of eight years, and assumed the monastic habit at Lindisfarne, in which place how meritoriously he lived, is amply testified by his being honourably interred near St. Cuthbert, and by many miracles vouchsafed from on high.

He had made provision against the state's being endangered, by placing his cousin, Eadbert,† on the throne, which he filled for twenty years with singular moderation and virtue. Eadbert had a brother of the same name, archbishop of York, who, by his own prudence and the power of the king, restored that see to its original state. For, as is well known to any one conversant in the history of the Angles,‡

* These lines are thus rendered into English:

"Beneath this stone Bede's mortal body lies;
God grant his soul may rest amid the skies.
May he drink deeply, in the realms above,
Of wisdom's fount, which he on earth did love!"

† Called Egbert by some writers.
‡ Paulinus had departed from Northumbria, in consequence of the confusion which prevailed on the death of Edwin. Bede, b. ii. c. 20. He died Oct. 10, 644.
Paulinus, the first prelate of the church of York, had been forcibly driven away, and died at Rochester, where he left that honourable distinction of the pall which he had received from pope Honorius. After him, many prelates of this august city, satisfied with the name of a simple bishopric, aspired to nothing higher: but when Eadbert was seated on the throne, a man of loftier spirit, and one who thought, that, "as it is over-reaching to require what is not our due, so is it ignoble to neglect our right," he reclaimed the pall by frequent appeals to the pope. This personage, if I may be allowed the expression, was the depository and receptacle of every liberal art; and founded a most noble library at York. For this I cite Alcuin,* as competent witness; who was sent from the kings of England to the emperor Charles the Great, to treat of peace, and being hospitably entertained by him, observes, in a letter to Eanbald, third in succession from Eadbert, "Praise and glory be to God, who hath preserved my days in full prosperity, that I should rejoice in the exaltation of my dearest son, who laboured in my stead, in the church where I had been brought up and educated, and presided over the treasures of wisdom, to which my beloved master, archbishop Egbert, left me heir." Thus too to Charles Augustus:† "Give me the more polished volumes of scholastic learning, such as I used to have in my own country, through the laudable and ardent industry of my master, archbishop Egbert. And, if it please your wisdom, I will send some of our youths, who may obtain thence whatever is necessary, and bring back into France the flowers of Britain; that the garden of Paradise may not be confined to York, but that some of its scions may be transplanted to Tours."

This is the same Alcuin, who, as I have said, was sent into France to treat of peace, and during his abode with Charles, captivated either by the pleasantness of the country or the kindness of the king, settled there; and being held in high estimation, he taught the king, during his leisure from

* Alcuin, a native of Northumbria, and educated at York, through his learning and talents became the intimate friend and favourite of Charlemagne, for whom he transcribed, with his own hand, the Holy Scriptures. This relic is now preserved in the British Museum.
† See this epistle at length in Alcuini Op. vol. i. p. 52. Epist. 38.
the cares of state, a thorough knowledge of logic, rhetoric, and astronomy. Alcuin was, of all the Angles, of whom I have read, next to St. Aldhelm and Bede, certainly the most learned, and has given proof of his talents in a variety of compositions. He lies buried in France, at the church of St. Paul, of Cormaric,* which monastery Charles the Great built at his suggestion: on which account, even at the present day, the subsistence of four monks is distributed in alms, for the soul of our Alcuin, in that church.

But since I am arrived at that point where the mention of Charles the Great naturally presents itself, I shall subjoin a true statement of the descent of the kings of France, of which antiquity has said much: nor shall I depart widely from my design; because to be unacquainted with their race, I hold as a defect in information; seeing that they are our near neighbours, and to them the Christian worldchiefly looks up: and, perhaps, to glance over this compendium may give pleasure to many who have not leisure to wade through voluminous works.

The Franks were so called, by a Greek appellative, from the ferocity of their manners, when, by order of the emperor Valentinian the First, they ejected the Alani, who had retreated to the Maëotian marshes. It is scarcely possible to believe how much this people, few and mean at first, became increased by a ten years' exemption from taxes: such, before the war, being the condition on which they engaged in it. Thus augmenting wonderfully by the acquisition of freedom, and first seizing the greatest part of Germany, and next the whole of Gaul, they compelled the inhabitants to list under their banners. Hence the Lotharingi and Allamanni, and other nations beyond the Rhine, who are subject to the emperor of Germany, will have themselves more properly to be called Franks; and those whom we suppose Franks, they call by an ancient appellative Galwale, that is to say, Gauls. To this opinion I assent; knowing that Charles the Great, whom none can deny to have been king of the Franks, always used the same vernacular language with the Franks on the other side of the Rhine. Any one who shall read the

* Others say he was buried at St. Martin's, at Tours, where he died, April 18, 804. His works will be included in Patres Ecclesiae Anglicanæ.
life of Charles will readily admit the truth of my assertion. In the year then of the Incarnate Word 425 the Franks were governed by Faramund, their first king. The grandson of Faramund was Meroveus, from whom all the succeeding kings of the Franks, to the time of Pepin, were called Merovingians. In like manner the sons of the kings of the Angles took patronymical appellations from their fathers. For instance; Eadgaring the son of Edgar; Eadmunding the son of Edmund, and the rest in like manner; commonly, however, they are called ethelings. The native language of the Franks, therefore, partakes of that of the Angles, by reason of both nations originating from Germany. The Merovingians reigned successfully and powerfully till the year of our Lord’s incarnation, 687. At that period Pepin, son of Ansegise, was made mayor of the palace among the Franks, on the other side of the Rhine. Seizing opportunities for veiling his ambitious views, he completely subjugated his master Theodoric, the dregs as it were of the Merovingians, and to lessen the obloquy excited by the transaction, he indulged him with the empty title of king, while himself managed every thing, at home and abroad, according to his own pleasure. The genealogy of this Pepin, both to and from him, is thus traced: Ausbert, the senator, on Blithilde, the daughter of Lothaire, the father of Dagobert, begot Arnold: Arnold begot St. Arnulph, bishop of Metz: Arnulph begot Flodulph, Walethise, Anschise: Flodulph begot duke Martin, whom Ebroin slew: Walethise begot the most holy Wandregesil the abbat: duke Anschise begot Ansegise: Ansegise begot Pepin. The son of Pepin was Carolus Tudites, whom they also call Martel, because he beat down the tyrants who were raising up in every part of France, and nobly defeated the Saracens, at that time infesting Gaul. Following the practice of his father, whilst he was himself satisfied with the title of earl, he kept the kings

* The Life of Charlemagne, by Eginhard, who was secretary to that monarch. Du Chesne Script. Franc. tom. ii. It is one of the most amusing books of the period.

† The mayors of the palace seem originally to have merely regulated the king’s household, but by degrees they acquired so much power, that Pepin the elder, maternal grandfather of him here mentioned, had already become in effect, king of France. They first appear to have usurped the regal power under Clovis II. A. D. 639.
in a state of pupilage. He left two sons, Pepin and Caroloman. Caroloman, from some unknown cause, relinquishing the world, took his religious vows at Mount Cassin. Pepin was crowned king of the Franks, and patrician of the Romans, in the church of St. Denys, by pope Stephen, the successor of Zachary. For the Constantinopolitan emperors, already much degenerated from their ancient valour, giving no assistance either to Italy or the church of Rome, which had long groaned under the tyranny of the Lombards, this pope bewailed the injuries to which they were exposed from them to the ruler of the Franks; wherefore Pepin passing the Alps, reduced Desiderius, king of the Lombards, to such difficulties, that he restored what he had plundered to the church of Rome, and gave surety by oath that he would not attempt to resume it. Pepin returning to France after some years, died, leaving his surviving children, Charles and Caroloman, his heirs. In two years Caroloman departed this life. Charles obtaining the name of "Great" from his exploits, enlarged the kingdom to twice the limits which it possessed in his father's time, and being contented for more than thirty years with the simple title of king, abstained from the appellation of emperor, though repeatedly invited to assume it by pope Adrian. But when, after the death of this pontiff, his relations maimed the holy Leo, his successors in the church of St. Peter, so as to cut out his tongue, and put out his eyes, Charles hastily proceeded to Rome to settle the state of the church. Justly punishing these abandoned wretches, he stayed there the whole winter, and restored the pontiff, now speaking plainly and seeing clearly, by the miraculous interposition of God, to his customary power. At that time the Roman people, with the privity of the pontiff, on the day of our Lord's nativity, unexpectedly hailed him with the title of Augustus; which title, though, from its being unusual, he reluctantly admitted, yet afterwards he defended with proper spirit against the Constantinopolitan emperors, and left it, as hereditary, to his son Louis. His descendants reigned in that country, which is now properly called France, till the time of Hugh, surnamed Capet, from whom is descended the present Louis. From the same stock came the sovereigns of Germany and Italy, till the year of our Lord 912, when Conrad, king of the Teutonians, seized
that empire. The grandson of this personage was Otho the Great, equal in every estimable quality to any of the emperors who preceded him. Thus admirable for his valour and goodness, he left the empire hereditary to his posterity; for the present Henry, son-in-law of Henry, king of England, derives his lineage from his blood.

To return to my narrative: Alcuin, though promoted by Charles the Great to the monastery of St. Martin in France, was not unmindful of his countrymen, but exerted himself to retain the emperor in amity with them, and stimulated them to virtue by frequent epistles. I shall here subjoin many of his observations, from which it will appear clearly how soon after the death of Bede the love of learning declined even in his own monastery; and how quickly after the decease of Eadbert the kingdom of the Northumbrians came to ruin, through the prevalence of degenerate manners.

He says thus to the monks of Wearmouth, among whom Bede had both lived and died, obliquely accusing them of having done the very thing which he begs them not to do, "Let the youths be accustomed to attend the praises of our heavenly King, not to dig up the burrows of foxes, or pursue the winding mazes of hares; let them now learn the Holy Scriptures, that, when grown up, they may be able to instruct others. Remember the most noble teacher of our times, Bede, the priest, what thirst for learning he had in his youth, what praise he now has among men, and what a far greater reward of glory with God." Again, to those of York he says, "The Searcher of my heart is witness that it was not for lust of gold that I came to France or continued there, but for the necessities of the church." And thus to Offa, king of the Mercians, "I was prepared to come to you with the presents of king Charles and to return to my country, but it seemed more advisable to me, for the peace of my nation, to remain abroad, not knowing what I could have done among those persons, with whom no one can be secure, or able to proceed in any laudable pursuit. Behold every holy place is laid desolate by Pagans, the altars are polluted by perjury, the monasteries dishonoured by adultery, the earth itself stained with the blood of rulers and of princes." Again, to king Ethelred, third in the sovereignty after Eadbert, "Behold the church of St. Cuthbert is sprinkled with
the blood of God's priests, despoiled of all its ornaments, and the holiest spot in Britain given up to Pagan nations to be plundered; and where, after the departure of St. Paulinus from York, the Christian religion first took its rise in our own nation, there misery and calamity took their rise also. What portends that shower of blood which in the time of Lent, in the city of York, the capital of the whole kingdom, in the church of St. Peter, the chief of the apostles, we saw tremendously falling on the northern side of the building from the summit of the roof, though the weather was fair? Must not blood be expected to come upon the land from the northern regions?" Again, to Osbert, prince of the Mercians, "Our kingdom of the Northumbrians has almost perished through internal dissensions and perjury." So also to Athelard, archbishop of Canterbury, "I speak this on account of the scourge which has lately fallen on that part of our island which has been inhabited by our forefathers for nearly three hundred and forty years. It is recorded in the writings of Gildas, the wisest of the Britons, that those very Britons ruined their country through the avarice and rapine of their princes, the iniquity and injustice of their judges, their bishops' neglect of preaching, the luxury and abandoned manners of the people. Let us be cautious that such vices become not prevalent in our times, in order that the divine favour may preserve our country to us in that happy prosperity for the future which it has hitherto in its most merciful kindness vouchsafed us."

It has been made evident, I think, what disgrace and what destruction the neglect of learning and the immoral manners of degenerate men brought upon England! These remarks obtain this place in my history merely for the purpose of cautioning my readers.

Eadbert, then, rivalling his brother in piety, assumed the monastic habit, and gave place to Oswulph, his son, who being, without any cause on his part, slain by his subjects, was, after a twelvemonth's reign, succeeded by Moll. Moll carried on the government with commendable diligence for eleven years,* and then fell a victim to the treachery of

* Malmesbury differs from all the best authorities, who assign only six years to his reign. He ascended the throne A.D. 759, and was expelled A.D. 765.
Alfred. Alfred in his tenth year was compelled by his countrymen to retire from the government which he had usurped. Ethelred too, the son of Moll, being elected king, was expelled by them at the end of five years. Alfwold was next hailed sovereign; but he also, at the end of eleven years, experienced the perfidy of the inhabitants, for he was cut off by assassination, though guiltless, as his distinguished interment at Hexham and divine miracles sufficiently declare. His nephew, Osred, the son of Alfred, succeeding him, was expelled after the space of a year, and gave place to Ethelred, who was also called Ethelbert. He was the son of Moll, also called Ethelwald, and, obtaining the kingdom after twelve years of exile, held it during four, at the end of which time, unable to escape the fate of his predecessors, he was cruelly murdered. At this, many of the bishops and nobles greatly shocked, fled from the country. Some indeed affirm that he was punished deservedly, because he had assented to the unjust murder of Osred, whereas he had it in his power to quit the sovereignty and restore him to his throne. Of the beginning of this reign Alcuin thus speaks: "Blessed be God, the only worker of miracles, Ethelred, the son of Ethelwald, went lately from the dungeon to the throne, from misery to grandeur; by the infancy of whose reign we are detained from coming to you."† Of his death he writes thus to Offa king of the Mercians: "Your esteemed kindness is to understand that my lord, king Charles, often speaks to me of you with affection and sincerity, and in him you have the firmest friend. He therefore sends becoming presents to your love, and to the several sees of your kingdom. In like manner he had appointed presents for king Ethelred, and for the sees of his bishops, but, oh, dreadful to think, at the very moment of despaching these gifts and letters there came a sorrowful account, by the

* Osred, through a conspiracy of his nobles, had been deposed, and, after receiving the tonsure, was compelled to go into exile. Two years after, induced by the promises and oaths of certain of the Northumbrian chiefs, he returned, but being deserted by his forces, he was made prisoner and put to death by the order of Ethelred. Sim. Dunelm, a.d. 790—2. Osred was expelled from his kingdom, a.d. 790, and Ethelred was restored after an exile of twelve years.—Hardy.
† This letter is not yet published in Alcuini Opera.
ambassadors who returned out of Scotland through your country, of the faithlessness of the people, and the death of the king. So that Charles, withholding his liberal gifts, is so highly incensed against that nation as to call it perfidious and perverse, and the murderer of its sovereigns, esteeming it worse than pagan; and had I not interceded he would have already deprived them of every advantage within his reach, and have done them all the injury in his power."

After Ethelred no one durst ascend the throne;* each dreading the fate of his predecessor, and preferring a life of safety in inglorious ease, to a tottering reign in anxious suspense: for most of the Northumbrian kings had ended their reigns by a death which was now become almost habitual. Thus being without a sovereign for thirty-three years, that province became an object of plunder and contempt to its neighbours. For when the Danes, who, as I have before related from the words of Alcuin, laid waste the holy places, on their return home represented to their countrymen the fruitfulness of the island, and the indolence of its inhabitants; these barbarians came over hastily, in great numbers, and obtained forcible possession of that part of the country, till the time we are speaking of: indeed they had a king of their own for many years, though he was subordinate to the authority of the king of the West Saxons. However, after the lapse of these thirty-three years, king Egbert obtained the sovereignty of this province, as well as of the others, in the year of our Lord's incarnation 827, and the twenty-eighth of his reign. And since we have reached his times, mindful of our engagement, we shall speak briefly of the kingdom of the Mercians; and this, as well because we admire brevity in relation, as that there is no great abundance of materials.

* This is not quite correct: Osbald was elected by a party to succeed him; but after a very short period he was deposed, and the government devolved on Eardulf. Eardulf after a few years was driven into exile; went to Rome, and, it would seem, was restored to his kingdom, by the influence of Charlemagne, a.d. 808. V. Sim. Dunelm. col. 117, and Eginhardi Annales, Duchesne, 2, 255.
CHAPTER IV.

Of the kings of the Mercians. [A.D. 626—874.]

In the year of our Lord's incarnation 626, and the hundred and thirty-ninth after the death of Hengist, Penda the son of Pybba, tenth in descent of Woden, of noble lineage, expert in war, but at the same time an irreligious heathen, at the age of fifty assumed the title* of king of the Mercians, after he had already fostered his presumption by frequent incursions on his neighbours. Seizing the sovereignty, therefore, with a mind loathing quiet and unconscious how great an enormity it was even to be victorious in a contest against his own countrymen, he began to attack the neighbouring cities, to invade the confines of the surrounding kings, and to fill everything with terror and confusion. For what would not that man attempt, who, by his lawless daring, had extinguished those luminaries of Britain, Edwin and Oswald, kings of the Northumbrians, Sigebert, Ecgric, and Anna, kings of the East Angles; men, in whom nobility of race was equalled by sanctity of life? Kenwalk also, king of the West Saxons, after being frequently harassed by him, was driven into exile; though, perhaps, he deservedly paid the penalty of his perfidy towards God, in denying his faith; and towards Penda himself, in repudiating his sister. It is irksome to relate, how eagerly he watched opportunities of slaughter, and as a raven flies greedily at the scent of a carcase, so he joined Cadwalla,† and was of infinite service to him, in recovering his dominions. In this manner, for thirty years, he attacked his countrymen, but did nothing worthy of record against strangers. His insatiable desires, however, at last found an end suitable to their deserts; for being routed, with his allies, by Oswy, who had succeeded his brother Oswald, more through the assistance

* It would appear that Penda was not the first king, but the first of any note. Hen. Huntingdon assigns the origin of the kingdom to about the year 584 under Crida, who was succeeded, in the year 600, by Pybba; Ceorl came to the throne in 610, and Penda in 626. See H. Hunt. f. 181, 184—b.

† King of the Britons, see Bede, b. ii. ch. 20. It was by his assistance that Cadwalla defeated Edwin, king of Northumbria, at Hatfield, Oct. 12, A.D. 683.
of God than his military powers, Penda increased the number of infernal spirits. By his queen Kyneswith his sons were Peada, Wulfhere, Ethelred, Merwal, and Mercelin: his daughters, Kyneburg, and Kyneswith; both distinguished for inviolable chastity. Thus the parent, though ever rebellious towards God, produced a most holy offspring for Heaven.

His son Peada succeeded him in a portion of the kingdom, by the permission of Oswy, advanced to the government of the South Mercians; a young man of talents, and even in his father's lifetime son-in-law to Oswy. For he had received his daughter, on condition of renouncing paganism and embracing Christianity; in which faith he would soon have caused the province of participate, the peaceful state of the kingdom and his father-in-law's consent tending to such a purpose, had not his death, hastened, as they say, by the intrigues of his wife, intercepted these joyful prospects. Then Oswy resumed the government, which seemed rightly to appertain to him from his victory over the father, and from his affinity to the son. The spirit, however, of the inhabitants could not brook his authority more than three years; for they expelled his generals, and Wulfhere, the son of Penda, being hailed as his successor, the province recovered its liberty.

Wulfhere, that he might not disappoint the hopes of the nation, began to act with energy, to show himself an efficient prince by great exertions both mental and personal, and finally to afford Christianity, introduced by his brother and yet hardly breathing in his kingdom, every possible assistance. In the early years of his reign he was heavily oppressed by the king of the West Saxons, but in succeeding times, repelling the injury by the energy of his measures, he deprived him of the sovereignty of the Isle of Wight; and leading it, yet panting after heathen rites, into the proper path, he soon after bestowed it on his godson, Ethelwalch, king of the South Saxons, as a recompence for his faith. But these and all his other good qualities are stained and deteriorated by the dreadful brand of simony; because he, first of the kings of the Angles, sold the sacred bishopric of London to one Wini, an ambitious man. His wife was Ermenhilda, the daughter of Erconbert, king of Kent, of
whom he begat Kinred, and Wereburga, a most holy virgin who lies buried at Chester. His brother Merewald married Ermenburga, the daughter of Ermenred, brother of the same Erconbert; by her he had issue, three daughters; Milburga, who lies at Weneloch; Mildritha in Kent, in the monastery of St. Augustine; and Milgitha: and one son, Merefin. Alfred king of the Northumbrians married Kyneburg, daughter of Penda: who, after a time, disgusted with wedlock, took the habit of a nun in the monastery which her brothers, Wulfhere and Ethelred, had founded.

Wulfhere died at the end of nineteen years, and his brother Ethelred ascended the throne; more famed for his pious disposition than his skill in war. Moreover he was satisfied with displaying his valour in a single but illustrious expedition into Kent, and passed the remainder of his life in quiet, except that attacking Egfrid, king of the Northumbrians, who had passed beyond the limits of his kingdom, he admonished him to return home, by the murder of his brother Elfwin. He atoned however for this slaughter, after due deliberation, at the instance of St. Theodore, the archbishop, by giving Egfrid a large sum of money.* Subsequently to this, in the thirtieth year of his reign, he took the cowl, and became a monk at Bardney, of which monastery he was ultimately promoted to be abbat. This is the same person who was contemporary with Ina, king of the West Saxons, and confirmed by his authority also the privilege which St. Aldhelm brought from Rome. His wife was Ostritha, sister of Egfrid, king of the Northumbrians, by whom she had issue a son named Ceolred.

He appointed Kenred, the son of his brother Wulfhere his successor, who, equally celebrated for piety to God and uprightness towards his subjects, ran his mortal race with great purity of manners, and proceeding to Rome in the fifth year of his reign, passed the remainder of his life there in the offices of religion; chiefly instigated to this by the melancholy departure of a soldier, who, as Bede relates,†

* This was by paying to his relatives his wergild, or the legal price of his blood; for all, from the king to the slave, had their established value. One moiety, only, of the wergild went to the family of the murdered person; the other went into the public purse.

† Ethelbald had been frequently exhorted by the king to make confession of his transgressions, but had constantly declined it. At last being
disdaining to confess his crimes when in health, saw, manifestly, when at the point of death, those very demons coming to punish him to whose vicious allurements he had surrendered his soul.

After him reigned Ceolred, the son of Ethelred his uncle, as conspicuous for his valour against Ina, as pitiable for an early death; for not filling the throne more than eight years, he was buried at Lichfield, leaving Ethelbald, the grand-nephew of Penda by his brother Alwy, his heir. This king, enjoying the sovereignty in profound and long-continued peace, that is, for the space of forty-one years, was ultimately killed by his subjects, and thus met with a reverse of fortune. Bernred, the author of his death, left nothing worthy of record, except that afterwards, being himself put to death by Offa, he received the just reward of his treachery. To this Ethelbald, Boniface,* archbishop of Mentz, an Angle by nation, who was subsequently crowned with martyrdom, sent an epistle, part of which I shall transcribe, that it may appear how freely he asserts those very vices to have already gained ground among the Angles of which Alcuin in after times was apprehensive. It will also be a strong proof, by the remarkable deaths of certain kings, how severely God punishes those guilty persons for whom his long-suspended anger mercifully waits.

† “To Ethelbald, my dearest lord, and to be preferred to all other kings of the Angles, in the love of Christ, Boniface the archbishop, legate to Germany from the church of Rome,

seized with sickness, he appears to have imagined that he saw two angels approach with a very small volume, in which were written the few good actions he had ever performed; when immediately a large company of demons advancing, display another book of enormous bulk and weight, containing all his evil deeds, which are read to him; after which, asserting their claim to the sinner against the angels, they strike him on the head and feet, as symptoms of his approaching end. Bede, b. v. c. 13.

* Boniface, whose original name was Winfred, after unwearied labour in the conversion of various nations in Germany, by which he acquired the honourable appellation of Apostle of the Germans, at length suffered martyrdom in Friesland. A collected edition of his works forms volumes xv. and xvi. of Patres Ecclesiae Anglicane by the editor of this work. One of the original churches, built by him in Saxony, still exists in the Duchy of Gotha, at a little village called Gicrstedt.

† See this epistle at length in Spelemanni Concilia, vol. i. page 232, and reprinted by Wilkins, Concilia, i. 87, also in Bonificii Opera, &c.
wisheth perpetual health in Christ. We confess before God that when we hear of your prosperity, your faith, and good works, we rejoice; and if at any time we hear of any adversity befallen you, either in the chance of war or the jeopardy of your soul, we are afflicted. We have heard that, devoted to almsgiving, you prohibit theft and rapine, are a lover of peace, a defender of widows, and of the poor; and for this we give God thanks. Your contempt for lawful matrimony, were it for chastity's sake, would be laudable; but since you wallow in luxury and even in adultery with nuns, it is disgraceful and damnable; it dims the brightness of your glory before God and man, and transforms you into an idolater, because you have polluted the temple of God. Wherefore, my beloved son, repent, and remember how dishonourable it is, that you, who, by the grant of God, are sovereign over many nations, should yourself be the slave of lust to his disservice. Moreover, we have heard that almost all the nobles of the Mercian kingdom, following your example, desert their lawful wives and live in guilty intercourse with adultresses and nuns. Let the custom of a foreign country teach you how far distant this is from rectitude. For in old Saxony, where there is no knowledge of Christ, if a virgin in her father's house, or a married woman under the protection of her husband, should be guilty of adultery, they burn her, strangled by her own hand, and hang up her seducer over the grave where she is buried; or else, cutting off her garments to the waist, modest matrons whip her and pierce her with knives, and fresh tormentors punish her in the same manner as she goes from town to town, till they destroy her. Again the Winedi,* the basest of nations, have this custom—the wife, on the death of her husband, casts herself on the same funeral pile to be consumed with him. If then the gentiles, who know not God, have so zealous a regard for chastity, how much more ought you to possess, my beloved son, who are both a Christian and a king? Spare therefore your own soul, spare a multitude of people, perishing by your example, for whose souls you must give account. Give heed to this too, if the nation of the Angles, (and we are reproached in France and

* The Winedi were seated on the western bank of the Vistula, near the Baltic. In Wilkins, it is "apud Persas," among the Persians.
in Italy and by the very pagans for it,) despising lawful
matrimony, give free indulgence to adultery, a race ignoble
and despising God must necessarily proceed from such a
mixture, which will destroy the country by their abandoned
manners, as was the case with the Burgundians, Provençals,
and Spaniards, whom the Saracens harassed for many years
on account of their past transgressions. Moreover, it has
been told us, that you take away from the churches and
monasteries many of their privileges, and excite, by your
example, your nobility to do the like. But recollect, I
entreat you, what terrible vengeance God hath inflicted upon
former kings, guilty of the crime we lay to your charge.
For Ceolred, your predecessor, the debaucher of nuns, the
infringer of ecclesiastical privileges, was seized, while
splendidly regaling with his nobles, by a malignant spirit,
who snatched away his soul without confession and without
communion, while in converse with the devil and despising
the law of God. He drove Osred also, king of the Deirans
and Bernicians, who was guilty of the same crimes, to such
excess that he lost his kingdom and perished in early
manhood by an ignominious death. Charles also, governor
of the Franks, the subverter of many monasteries and the
appropriator of ecclesiastical revenues to his own use,
perished by excruciating pain and a fearful death.” And
afterwards, “Wherefore, my beloved son, we entreat with
paternal and fervent prayers that you would not despise the
counsel of your fathers, who, for the love of God, anxiously
appeal to your highness. For nothing is more salutary to a
good king than the willing correction of such crimes when
they are pointed out to him; since Solomon says ‘Whoso
loveth instruction, loveth wisdom.’ Wherefore, my dearest
son, showing you good counsel, we call you to witness, and
entreat you by the living God, and his Son Jesus Christ,
and by the Holy Spirit, that you would recollect how
fleeting is the present life, how short and momentary is the
delight of the filthy flesh, and how ignominious for a person
of transitory existence to leave a bad example to posterity.
Begin therefore to regulate your life by better habits, and cor-
rect the past errors of your youth, that you may have praise
before men here, and be blest with eternal glory hereafter.
We wish your Highness health and proficiency in virtue.”