The tenth century English renaissance

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The Tenth Century English Renaissance

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THE TENTH CENTURY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

I. Historical Background
   A. Ninth Century - Work of Alfred
   B. Tenth Century - Political Situation

II. Monasticism
   A. Introductory History
   B. Leaders
      1. Edgar
      2. Dunstan
      3. Aethelwold
      4. Oswald
   C. Growth
      1. Influence of Continental Movement
      2. Condition of English Clergy
      3. Enforcement of the Benedictine Rule
   D. Results of Reform Movement
      1. In Church and State
         a. Cosmopolitanism
         b. Unity
      2. In Education
         a. Establishing of schools
         b. Agriculture
      3. In the Arts
         a. Architecture
         b. Music
         c. Book-making
d. Illumination 

e. Literature 

III. Attainments of Literature 

A. Prose - represented by Aelfric 

1. Sketch of Author's Life 

2. Homilies and Lives of the Saints 

B. Poetry 

1. The Battle of Brunanburh 

2. The Battle of Maldon 

IV. Significance of the Renaissance
"A. 901. This year died Alfred, the son of Ethelwulf, six days before the mass of All Saints."

Thus reads the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the beginning of a century in which the final attempt was made to establish Old English permanently. The dawn of the tenth century in England saw that country not over­spread with the peace, the prosperity, and the learning that the good king would have been pleased to leave with his kingdom. Year by year before 901 the Chronicle furnishes account of harryings by the Danes, and evidence of internal disturbance; a fearful pestilence had just ceased,— "a mortality among cattle and among men."
The Northumbrians and East Anglians harrassed the land of the West Saxons, and the Danes made themselves bold in all parts of Alfred's land.

This, however, is only the dark side of that beautiful reign, for even in its darkness Alfred was master of the situation. He made for every difficulty a solution to the best of his means, whether it was an affair of church, of state, or one concerning only his own household. When he saw that the Danes were aided by the use of ships, he began ship-building in his own land; that the people of the country might be supplied with provisions during time of conflict, he divided the
army, one part to defend against the Danes, the other to tend the crops. Perceiving that Charlemagne had raised the standard of intelligence in his country by gathering together great men at his court, Alfred likewise invited to his court great men, such as Asser, Bishop of Sherbourne, and Ohthere, who for centuries held the record of having travelled farthest north. Deploring the fact that the people and most of the priests could neither read nor write Latin, he undertook to translate those works which he considered "most needful" to them into the vernacular, thus beginning English prose literature. He compiled English laws and started the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle by collecting all of the chronicles kept in the various monasteries. In short, he attained the ambition of his life, stated as follows in his own words: "It has ever been my desire to live honorably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them who should come after me my memory in good works."

This brief survey of the life work of Alfred the Great, then, furnishes the background for the century to follow his reign. The thread of unity between the tenth century and those preceding and following is preserved by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The Danes began again very early after Alfred's death their plunder and their efforts to create disturbance within the kingdom.
The Chronicle for 905 says: "This year Aethelwold enticed the army in East Anglia to break the peace, so that they ravaged over all the land of Mercia until they came to Cricklade, and there they went over the Thames, and took, as well in Bodon as thereabout, all that they could lay hands on, and then turned homewards again." Thus proceeds the remainder of the reign of King Edward, the son and successor of King Alfred, until his death in 925. His son Aethelstan came to the throne, and although the Chronicle for his reign gives no impression of a revival of learning, the year of his accession produced the very fountainhead of the renaissance of the latter half of the tenth century, -- St. Dunstan.

From other sources, however, the information comes that Aethelstan, too, was filled with a desire to do something other than fight for his country. The navy started by Alfred had not as yet been the means of promoting commerce, on account of the insidiousness of the piratic Norsemen and a lack of ships and sailors. The latter hindrance Aethelstan sought to efface by a decree that entitled any merchant who had made three long sea voyages at his own expense to be a thane or gentleman. During his fourteen years of turbulent kingship he also endeavored to advance his native tongue
by ordering a translation of the Scriptures. He gave to the church of Durham a copy of the four Gospels, now in the Cottonian Library, British Museum. 4

The death of Aethelstan brought Edmund, his brother, to the throne. Edmund's reign of six years saw the beginning of civil peace, a beginning furthered in the following reign with Edred king. In these years the fortunes of St. Dunstan, too, are noted in the Chronicle: 943, King Edmund "delivered Glastonbury to St. Dunstan, where he afterwards became the first abbot;" 955, King Edred "banished St. Dunstan out of the land;" 957, Dunstan was driven over the sea; 959, "Edgar sent after St. Dunstan, and gave him the bishopric at Worcester, and afterwards the bishopric at London." In 961, St. Dunstan succeeded Odo, the Good, deceased, to the archbishopric of Canterbury. Before the death of Dunstan in 988, the climax of kingly weakness is reached in the person of Aethelred, the Unready, in whose reign a most violent transgression against Anglo-Saxon independence occurs; namely, the paying of tribute to the Danes in 991, "on account of the great terror which they caused by the sea-coast."

A sketch with regard to the territorial history will furnish further evidence that there was little conducive to a renaissance in the first half of the tenth century, for even Alfred's immediate successors,
great as they were in state-craft and war, lacked his zeal in learning and his intelligent earnestness in religion. In fact, their greater interest was occupied in an endeavor to enlarge their domains; England was not then the "United Kingdom". At Alfred's death his dominions comprised Wessex and a part of Mercia. The former passed into the hands of Edward; the latter remained under the control of Aethelred, Alfred's son-in-law. Aethelred's death brought Aethelflaed, his wife, into power in Mercia. After Aethelflaed's death Edward annexed all of his sister's territories. In 924, he went against the Danes in Northumbria, who submitted to him without a single blow. This brought under Edward's control all of Britain from sea to sea, an overlordship that he was not to enjoy long, for in 925 his death occurred. During Aethelstan's reign the treachery of the Northumbrian Danes proved itself and Aethelstan was forced to go against Constantine, King of the Scots, in battle. Anlaf, King of Ireland, came over from Dublin to help Constantine, but Aethelstan overthrew them in a crushing defeat, which occasion furnished the theme of that glorious war song, "The Battle of Brunanburh". Thus again was the king of Wessex overlord of all Britain. In like manner the Danes revolted against each of the succeeding kings,
only to be overcome. During the reign of Edwig, Northumbria and Mercia chose Edgar, Edwig's brother, as their king, instead of their own Danish princes; hence at Edwig's death in 958, Edgar became king of all three provinces, and thus was Teutonic England for the first time united into one kingdom. Then, and not until then, was the time ripe for a revival of learning.

There seems to have been at that time no provision for education, except as the church responded to the need by the establishing of monastic schools. Monasticism had progressed rapidly in England during the seventh and eighth centuries, and with the religious houses were connected such men as Augustine, Paulinus, Aidan, Benedict Biscop, Wilfred, Theodore of Tarsus, Caedmon, the first English poet, Boniface, Alcuin, and the venerable Bede, who "always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing". King Alfred's century, however, gave a very different turn to the educational outlook, for the monasteries and churches with their wealth became the special objects of Danish plunder,— raiding which continued until monasteries almost ceased to exist. Through Alfred's own words in his "Preface to the Pastoral Care," is shown the general lack of learning and the low state of the source of learning: Namely, the Church. "When I remembered all this, I remembered also how I saw before it was all
harried and burned, how the churches over all England stood filled with treasures and books, and also a great host of God's servants; and at that time they knew very little use for those books, because they could not understand anything of them, for they were not written in their own language. "5 Alfred hoped that the translations which he made from Latin into English, and the general impetus which he had given to the cause of learning, would be fruitful. But whether on account of the continuous hostilities, or because of the indifference of the bishops themselves, through whom Alfred made his greatest effort to improve conditions, this literary reform started so beautifully by Alfred had little effect, and that little even seems to manifest itself most strongly and primarily in its influence on the later writing of Aelfric, to whom Alfred was a source of both inspiration and material. 6

As has already been noted, the warlike atmosphere of the first half of the tenth century made impossible a monastic revival, and not until the comparatively peaceful reign of Edgar did a real attempt at reform come. Just as it was fortunate for the success of Dunstan's cause that when he was ready to push his work, such a king as Edgar occupied the throne, so also was it fortunate that Dunstan had suffered the infamy of banishment in the reign of Edgar's predecessor. For
during that short period of ostracism, he took refuge in St. Peter's at Ghent, where he had the opportunity to study carefully the Benedictine rule, strictly enforced there.

The story of Dunstan's life contains in general the essential features of the whole monastic reform movement. He was its "living light fountain -- the light which enlightened". The early days of Dunstan cannot be dissociated from the Glastonbury school -- a school -- one of the few surviving remnants from the period of devastation -- which had never broken away entirely from Celtic influence. Dunstan, a visionary, imaginative youth who saw doves from heaven, and who heard the music of heavenly harps, did not confine his energies wholly to things religious, but reached out in all directions wherever his imagination led him. His interest in music -- his harp was said to be his constant companion -- his skill in handicraft, his ready, gay wit, his marked ability and attainments in learning, -- all served to attract royal attention and eventually to draw him into Aethelstan's court. Thus began the career of the future monk-statesman, in whom the union of the church and the state was to become more firmly cemented. Dunstan's appointment as abbot of Glastonbury by Edmund gave to him the opportunity
of promoting in various ways the interests of that school. Although required to remain with the king much of the time, he still was able to teach, to train scholars in philosophy, to collect a good library, and to establish other centers of learning. It was not until Dunstan's appointment as archbishop of Canterbury that he came into the possession of his highest power, and that he was able to wield his greatest influence.

But the presence of Dunstan at Glastonbury did not afford the sole source of that school's later prominence; Aethelwold, a monk of about Dunstan's own age, who studied and counseled much with Dunstan, also lived at Glastonbury for a few years. Through the efforts of the king's mother, Edgiva, Aethelwold was diverted from his intention of entering any of the French monastic orders, and the ruins of the old abbey at Abingdon were turned over to him for upbuilding. This school Aethelwold as abbot soon made the equal of Glastonbury. But he was not to remain there long. In 963 Brihthelm, Bishop of Winchester, died, and the promotion to that position fell to Aethelwold, his school at Winchester rapidly becoming the most famous in all England. The higher office giving to Aethelwold higher authority, he purged the
monastery of the secular clergy who were, according to the accounts of churchmen, dissolute and degraded, and in their stead he introduced monks from Abingdon. In this he was assisted materially by King Edgar. New monasteries were founded, and old ones re-peopled. It is said that during the reigns of Edgar and his sons more than forty were opened, occupied by monks trained at Abingdon or Winchester, -- all under the Benedictine rule. These monasteries received rich royal gifts; the king, lending himself to the careful instruction and earnest personal influence of the two able and famous churchmen, not only approved of the new movement, but moreover left no act undone which would further their interest, -- and the monastic revival was during his reign at its height in vigor.

Aethelwold found very able assistance in Oswald, a nephew of Odo, former archbishop of Canterbury. Upon Oswald's return to England after his monastic training at Fleury, he was made bishop, at Worcester, where he established a new monastery very close to the old one already occupied by secular clergy, and placed therein a number of monks from France. Several other monasteries were instituted through Oswald's influence, notably Ely and Ramsay, the latter a favorite foundation of his. To this school came,
among others, the noted scholar, Abbo of Fleury, who
for two years gave instruction in Benedictine usages.
Although Oswald was appointed archbishop of York in
addition to his bishopric at Worcester, his influence
with the latter always remained the greater.

Oswald, Aethelwold, and Dunstan were the three
churchmen to whom the spread of monasticism was due,
and each had his own characteristic way of advancing
the power of his church. An interesting illustration
of Oswald's tact comes in connection with his judici­
ous managing of the situation at Worcester in his
early days there as bishop. By establishing his monks
in a new minster, allowing the secular clergy to re­
main in the old one, good feeling was maintained. No
compulsion seems to have been used, but gradually many
of the seculars, along with the people, were won over
to Oswald's minster, attracted more strongly by the
Benedictine service. Nor is there account of violence
in connection with any of his dealings with the secular
clergy. That characteristic seemed to exist more
prominently in the "father of the monks," Aethelwold.
In his diocese at Winchester secular canons had to
conform to the mandates of the Benedictines, or to
withdraw themselves in order to "give place to the
monks who professed the Rule". The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
for the year 963 gives the story in a few simple words:
"In the year after he was consecrated, then made he many minsters, and drove the clerks out of the bishopric, because they would not observe any rule, and he set monks there." Dunstan's policy with regard to monasticism is rather hard to trace, owing to the prejudices apparent in the existing accounts of his work. It seems, though, to have been conciliatory rather than over-aggressive, a tendency which was his in state-craft also. His influence so far as religion and education were concerned was greatest through his counsels to Edgar.

Monasticism, then, comes to the foreground as the prominent fact of the tenth century in England — monasticism for the most part of the strictest enforcement of the Rule of St. Benedict. In the movement centers the culture of the whole period. The wave of monastic enthusiasm struck the island first from France, where after a period of decay similar to that in England, the religious houses were filled with a new ardor, under the Benedictine Rule. One of the earliest of these was the Congregation of Cluny, founded very early in the century. Another, at Fleury, however, figures more largely in direct influence on English monks, first, perhaps, through the instruction of Odo, Odo being appointed archbishop of Canterbury and wishing to live up to his idea that no one ought
to become an archbishop who was not a monk in the strictest sense of the term, received the monastic habit through the famous Abbey of Fleury. Later Aethelwold, who some time earlier had been persuaded to give up his plan to affiliate himself with a monastery on the Continent, sent Osgar, one of his monks, to Fleury to study the system of the order and to fit himself to teach it at home. And, of course, the visit of Abbo of Fleury, at Ramsay, was not without its influence.

During his whole term as archbishop of Canterbury Odo was distinguished by the zeal with which he advocated the rigid system of monarchism then prevalent in France. Previous to this time, the Anglo-Saxon church had been administered chiefly by the secular clergy, and on this fact hinges the entire disturbance later in the century -- the conflict between the regular clergy, or monks, and the secular clergy, or parish priests and canons. Between these two bodies very few common bonds existed. The monks had no worldly ties; the priests lived very much as other men, married and reared children, shared the parish troubles and felt its wants. For his support the priest depended upon the church, but in return he conformed to no regular order. In fact, there seems to have been very little
difference between the priest and the ordinary man of his parish so far as spirituality was concerned. The clergy, upon whom so much had depended, to whom the country should have looked for leaders, had forgotten its ecclesiastical existence and was interesting itself with worldly matters. The priests held as their reason for being the fact that they worked among and helped others; the aim of the monks was inward perfection -- the living of the Christ life within, so far as their human qualities would permit. The monk party was backed by strong power, by men of indomitable courage, and of conquering will. The reform movement, once these men had seen the "gleam", was inevitable.

The great spirit behind the revival movement lived in Italy some four centuries previous to this renaissance time. Aelfric describes him thus: "This blessed man Benedict wrote the rule of monks with great judgment, in brilliant language, in which every man may know all the acts of his teachership; for the saint so lived as he taught." The Benedictine vows were four in number: poverty, chastity, obedience, and labor. The last must have been of much import during this century following the vast devastation. The Rule consists of seventy-three chapters, touching upon every phase of existence in an institution made up of a variety of characters subjected to one absolute ruler.
It contained a code of laws regulating the duties between the abbot and his monks, the mode of conducting divine services, the administration of penalties and discipline, the duties of monks to each other, the internal economy of the monastery, the duties of the institution to the world outside, the distribution of charity, the kindly reception of strangers, the laws governing those who were compelled to be absent. There was to be labor, not only in the contemplative form of war against the flesh and the devil, but also vigorous, healthy, bodily labor, with the pen in the scriptorium, with the spade in the fields, and with whatever was necessary in the building up and promotion of the institution's welfare. The picture which Scheffel gives in "Ekkehard" portrays concretely and vividly the inside workings of the Benedictine Rule, the author laying the foundation of his story in the monastery at St. Gall, Switzerland. Every monk was busy with his own particular work; the system seemed perfect.

The effort has been made to point out the indifference in religious and national standards in tenth century England. The Danes still harried from without; civil discords filled a position too prominent within the state. Moreover, the near approach of the year 1000, the date commonly accepted throughout Christendom for
the end of the world, did not serve to stimulate enthusiasm for progress in any direction.

The great men of the time saw nothing better than the Benedictine Rule to supply a basis of common ideals in this time of uncertainty. This Rule they endeavored to establish, and the wide-spread results of their efforts were evidenced in the rapid growth of the number of monasteries, and in the important parts taken by monks of the century in national life. Sincerity was the key-note of the new movement, an absolutely sincere attempt to live this life in a Christ-like way. The monks' philosophy, true to Benedictine principles, was one of individual perfection. The monks were spiritual; they were essentially men of strength. A monastery was no place for a weakling.

What were the results of the tenth century monastic revival in England? There was no result which has made a great material, vital difference in the world's history, or in England's own history; the period contained no Waterloo. The Norman Conquest followed too closely to allow prophecy as to what the outcome of the new start in Anglo-Saxon prose would have been in a literary way. The revival even brought forth little of importance or of advantage to the church itself; abuses still existed, wealth and luxury again attracted monks, and yet the revival did have certain definite results, which were very much worth while.
In the first place, through the interchange of monks with continental monasteries, cosmopolitanism was preserved. A medium was furnished whereby England kept in touch with southern Europe's civilization. Men went to the continent, and returned with new zeal, new ambitions to advance their own land. English monasteries were visited by foreign monks whose ideas and ideals were respected. By taking the Benedictine vows, a monk placed himself on a par with great minds of his own country; by establishing the Benedictine rule throughout its monastic system, English ecclesiasticism had a common bond with that of the European nations in a fraternal way. The monasteries alone kept alive in England a knowledge of Latin, the international means of communication. England as an island might have easily become provincial, self-satisfied, inert; monasticism kept before it the ideals and attainments of other countries. But not only in connection with France, Italy, Spain, or Germany did monasticism tend to broaden English experience. In the monasteries books were read, written, and preserved. The learning of the seventh and eighth centuries again received attention. Bede was still recognized as a worthy authority by the monks; Aelfric makes frequent reference to Bede's interpretations of spiritual things. The manuscript of Beowulf in its present form dates
from the tenth century, -- the work of a monk's pen in a monastic scriptorium; chronicles were kept, -- a motley collection of historical facts and strange beliefs. Hence, cosmopolitanism in time as well as in space manifests itself in the tenth century English renaissance, -- a cosmopolitanism which takes in early native life as well as that of contemporary foreign countries.

Another accomplishment of the tenth century reform was the unity given to church and state. Although primarily an ecclesiastic, Dunstan recognized keenly his obligations as a statesman. As Archbishop of Canterbury, he was ex officio not only the highest ranking English churchman, but also the chief advisor of the king, perhaps the most famous of all down to Thomas a' Becket of Henry VIII.'s reign. Edgar and Dunstan worked in perfect harmony, and were unbending in their efforts to promote the highest interests of both national and ecclesiastical affairs; Edgar, the political head, exerted his utmost authority in the promulgation of monasticism; Dunstan, on the other hand, even though a churchman, used his administrative judgment in putting forth a code, known as the laws of Edgar, for the better government of Wessex. Thus evidence is furnished to show the united sympathy between archbishop and king, between church and state -- a unity which made possible a more intelligent and profitable crusade for both.
A third result was, perhaps, more far-reaching in its nature: namely, the establishing of monastic schools. The first of these, Glastonbury, St. Dunstan's school, has already been discussed, as have also Abingdon, Aethelwold's first independent charge, and Winchester, his second school, and the school of Aelfric's youth. As to the importance of these institutions a historian says: "There can be no doubt that the foundation of the two schools at Glastonbury and Abingdon gave the impulse which Alfred had given, a new strength and guidance. It is from them we must date the use of the second Old English literature, a literature which bears the stamp of Wessex, as the first had borne the stamp of Northumbria." Ely, Worcester, Ramsay, Thorney, and Peterborough are others which attained distinction, the last named, Peterborough, having credit for the latest use of Old English in the continuation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to the year 1154, almost a century after the Norman Conquest.

A word as to the founding of some of the greater monasteries may serve to give them a setting in history. Bury St. Edmunds was built on the spot where were interred the relics of St. Edmund after his martyrdom by the Danes. The grant of land was made in 946 by Edmund; a wooden church was built, later replaced by
one of stone. The institution became famous in the twelfth century through the Abbot Samson, best known now in Carlyle's "Past and Present".

The fortunes of Milton after its foundation in 939 were rather uncertain and varied during the tenth century. King Aethelstan felt partly responsible for the death of his brother Edwin and in expiation he determined to build a monastery for Benedictine monks and to dedicate it to Lady Mary and Saint Michael. Life there must have reached a low ebb very early, for in 964 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells that "Edgar expelled the priests from Milton and filled their places with monks".

Although a monastery was founded in 682, at Pershore, there is little known of its history. About 972 Edgar dedicated a church and monastery to St. Mary, St. Peter, and St. Paul, and restored to the institution the lands which had been taken from them in past troubles. The buildings, made of wood, were more than once destroyed by fire, "as were also many other churches in England built by Edgar and Aethelwold".

In Sherbourne, as in other tenth century religious establishments, secular canons had possession. Here they remained until 998. Sherbourne is of interest rather for its previous history than its later, because of the personality of its first bishop, St. Aldhelm,
who, it is claimed, was the first writer of Anglo-Latin poetry. "King Alfred placed him in the first rank of the vernacular poets of his country; and we learn from William of Malmsbury that, even so late as the twelfth century, some pieces which were attributed to him, still continued to be popular."

Thorney, re-established by Aethelwold, was on an especially sacred island. Except to offer devotions no women were allowed to set foot on the island; the nearest approach they could make was nine miles away. The same church set up by St. Aethelwold, who apparently presided over it while he lived, lasted more than a century.

Most of the story concerning the rebuilding of Canterbury comes from the pen of Eadmer, a scholar in Canterbury during the time of Landfranc. Archbishop Odo ordered a rebuilding and heightening of the walls. It is said that he prayed that no rain might fall into the church so long as the roof was off. In answer to his prayer, for the space of three years "did no rain fall either within the walls of the church or even within the walls of the city, . . . and truly, it was a sight worth seeing to behold the land beyond the walls of the city drenched with water, while the walls themselves were quite dry."

Ely, although not so famous in an educational way as the two southern schools, Glastonbury and Winchester,
has a distinction quite its own in having received a gift from Byrhtnoth, the hero of Maldon. An interesting story in connection with the bestowal of the gift goes as follows:

"Before the battle at Maldon Byrhtnoth stopped at the Abbot of Ramsay's for food for his men. The abbot very cordially invited him with a half-dozen of his men to dine with him, but Byrhtnoth answered, 'I cannot fight without my men, I will not dine without them.' The Abbot of Ely, seven miles beyond, considered the hospitality a privilege. Byrhtnoth bequeathed his property to Ely, property which is still available."¹⁶ Byrhtnoth was buried in Ely cathedral.

Dr. Caroline L. White quotes from Conybeare the following, concerning the importance of Ely in an educational way. "The restoration of Ely is an event of first importance in Cambridgeshire. Cambridge itself would probably but for Ely have remained an obscure provincial town instead of one of the great intellectual centers in the world. For from Ely, we shall see, came almost certainly the earliest germs of our University life."¹⁷

Thus is the general interest in monastic growth made evident; it was not confined to a few enthusiasts,
or to ecclesiastic fanatics, but consisted in a widespread desire for enlightenment. The monastic schools, open to all whether they took the vows or not, must have been a power for culture in those days of intellectual chaos. The learning was confined not only to Latin but included also a study of the vernacular. A knowledge of science was gained through a textbook compiled by Bede. That the men of the century were not oblivious to the wonders of the heavens is evident through the numerous astronomical references in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Moreover, a still broader view of the educational outlook presents itself through an ecclesiastical law ascribed to Edgar requiring that "every parish priest is to teach manual arts with diligence," an indication that other opportunities for learning than those offered by monasteries, were provided in the various parishes. It is to the latter class of teachers, no doubt, that Aelfric makes his earnest appeal through the Homilies.

And along industrial lines, too, did monastic influence prove to be of very great value. The science of agriculture the monks advanced almost to an art. Labor itself was given a new dignity through the Benedictine Rule; "if the necessity of the place, or poverty, require that the brethren employ themselves with gathering crops, let them not be cast down; for
when they live by the work of their hands they are truly monks, like our fathers and the apostles.\textsuperscript{19}

Since many of the monasteries were founded in waste places -- low, marshy land -- and since according to the Rule of St. Benedict each monastery was to be sufficient unto itself, the reason for the progress and success of the monks in agriculture is not difficult to see. Not only must the land be reclaimed, but it must be made productive enough to supply the needs of the monastery. Within the monastic territories farming took on a more scientific aspect than that of the surrounding farmers, for in this, too, the monk was working for the glory of his Lord, not as a tenant serving an earthly lord, for protection. Of Thorney, founded by St. Aethelwold, William of Malmesbury writes as follows: "It is a very Paradise in pleasure and delight; it resembles heaven itself -- it abounds in lofty trees, neither is any waste place in it; for in some parts there are apple trees, in others vines which either spread along the ground or run along poles."\textsuperscript{20} Rowland E. Prothero in his \textit{English Farming: Past and Present} thus states his estimate of the monastic work in agriculture: "Throughout the Middle Ages, both in England and France, it was mainly the influence of the monks which built roads and bridges, improved livestock, drained marshes, cleared forests, reclaimed
wastes, and brought barren land into cultivation."

But agriculture did not furnish the only opportunity for manual service. In the arts, too, the field was broad even for those of inartistic temperament; the rapid growth of architecture during the period furnished varied occupations for the ordinary laborer. G. Baldwin Brown says, "Although it is true that in Europe generally the first half of the eleventh century was one very fertile in agricultural undertakings, in England it seems to have been the last half of the tenth that showed this special activity." Not only was it necessary to restore the ruins left by the devastations of the Danes, but also did the new establishments require housing.

In the building of these cathedrals monks were the architects. Theirs was not a selfish aim; they were building for the glory of God. Every effort was sincere and every bit of labor was rendered with the earnestness of the whole monastic ideal behind it. From the most skilled to the lowest workman, the same working out of a soul must have been present. The laborer's devotion was his inspiration as well as his guidance. The spirit, the mystery, the sense of "something beyond," the impression of majesty and repose, perceptible even in the crude Anglo-Saxon architecture, came as a result of the infusion of souls into every part of the edifice, from
the tower to the "iron scroll work spreading from the hinges of the sacristy door," or the "pierced leafage of the censer-lid".

The remains of Saxon architecture are scant, although there are many signs which would indicate that many Norman churches were erected on the same sites as earlier Saxon structures, possibly with certain parts just as they were originally built. The Anglo-Saxon buildings were not proportioned in such a way as to stand permanently. Balance and provision for varying strains, so carefully worked out in later Gothic, seem to have been not a part of the architectural feeling of the Anglo-Saxons of the tenth century. Two remnants, however, which exist today, are the pillars of a Saxon crypt at Ripton, and fragmentary remains of a Saxon church at Westminster Abbey.

That the style and plan of architecture took on a new aspect is evident in a passage quoted from the Chronicle of Ramsay concerning the erection of that cathedral. "All through the following winter they are getting together all that the forethought of the masons demanded, whether in tools of iron, or tools of wood, and everything else that seemed needful for the future building. At length when winter is past, the storehouses are thrown open, the most skilled workmen available are brought together, and the length and
width of the church which is to be built are measured out. The foundations are dug deep on account of the marshy character of the site, and the earth is beaten with many strokes of the rammer to solidify it for the support of the weight. The labourers, inspired as much by the warmth of their devotion as by the desire for pay, are instant in their toil; while some bring the stones, others are mixing mortar, and a third party raises both stones and mortar aloft to the work by the aid of pulleys, and so with the help of the Lord the structure rises daily higher and higher."

"Two towers soared on high above the roofs, of which the lesser one was at the western end, on the front of the building, and offered from afar a stately spectacle to those entering our island; while the greater one, in the center of the cruciform structure, stood upon four pillars which were joined together pair by pair by arches thrown across from wing to wing to preserve the dignity of the fabric. Compared with the old-fashioned method of building which had before prevailed, it was a structure of no mean pretension." The church was dedicated in 974. It will be remembered that Ramsay has been mentioned as a favorite foundation of Oswald.

The quotation above cited speaks of two towers on Ramsay cathedral, one central and one western. The tower was a particular feature which varied considerably
in the different churches, some having a western tower only, others either central or axial, still others the twin-towered facade. Besides these forms, there was another in which the tower formed the body of the church. Of these types the western tower seems to have been most frequently constructed. But in spite of these and other variations the work of Saxon architects can be quite clearly traced, and, obviously, it is in the extant fragments of religious houses that the architectural history is most definitely written.

The erection of monasteries, richly endowed as they were, not only promoted architecture, but, moreover, furnished a powerful stimulus to the decorative arts, and here too was splendor for the glory of God the aim. Everything connected with the religious service was developed to the highest degree possible. For example, embroidery for use in ecclesiastical vestments attained a very high grade of perfection; specimens exquisite in workmanship, dating from the tenth century, are treasured now in Durham Cathedral Library. Plate-work for chalices also had an interesting development at this time; as in embroidery, only the best, that of greatest value, was to be used for ecclesiastical purposes. Gold and silver then were approved -- never wood or horn. The gold and silver work evolved from Ireland where many monks were excellent goldsmiths. Dunstan, too, was
a goldsmith of no mean ability, and he may have been a jeweller as well, for "we find in old inventories, entries of finger rings described as the productions of the great prelate". 23

Although the history of stained and painted glass is very barren during the ninth and tenth centuries in England, it seems probable that the glass which filled the small, round-headed windows of the churches was colored. It is known that Benedict Biscop brought glass workers from Gaul to glaze the windows of Jarrow and Wearmouth, but the exact date when plain glass began to give way to glass intentionally coloured and arranged in patterns can only be inferred by a comparison with continental churches and by the coloring of glass cups and beads found in Anglo-Saxon graves. 24

One of the fine arts practiced which is always connected with St. Dunstan is music. There is no evidence of any new instruments characteristic of the renaissance period, but various types were already in existence. On account of St. Dunstan's skill as a harpist more than any other one accomplishment or ability, does his name even today hold fascination and fame; the reputation which his favorite instrument brought to him during his own day was less flattering for it associated him with the black arts, and gained for him the unenviable name of sorcerer. He had constructed for himself a harp
which was said to be self-playing -- or rather, which was supposed to be played by unseen hands, whenever it hung on the wall. One writer is unkind enough to take all the magic out of the harp and the mystery out of the story by saying that in our practical day, when there is no time for sentiment, "Nature herself has transformed the telegraph wires of busy men into grand Aeolian Harps, and plays on them the ceaseless music of the breeze." Another instrument said to be played by St. Dunstan was the Timpan -- a three-stringed instrument made of sallow-wood. It was played with the finger-nails, and the tone of its bronze strings was soft and sweet. Further information as to Dunstan's connection with the art of music is suggested by his biographer, Osbern, who tells of Dunstan's "taking the Psaltery, striking the Lyre, modulating the Organ, and touching the Cymbals". The Organistrum, an instrument which in one form or another has existed from the tenth century to our own time, was greatly esteemed for church purposes because of its reasonable exactness in reproducing tone and the ease with which it could be played. The Horn, in its varied forms, however, holds more interest for the Anglo-Saxon, since the Horn is the instrument in which he has shown a certain amount of originality. Manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries show the development of the Horn.
First it was merely the horn of some animal adorned and decorated; then appeared the instrument made of metal and tapering from the mouth-piece to a large open end, and frequently ornamented with bands of gold and silver. The latest tenth century type of the Horn was the Cornett, "an invention, such as it was, due to our own countrymen, for the earliest illustrations are all of English workmanship".25

Closely allied with the manufacture of musical instruments was the making of bells, although bells, of course, are not properly classed as musical instruments. In this craft St. Aethelwold stands at the head of the list; the skill he possessed was probably acquired during his stay at Glastonbury with Dunstan who was also a master hand in the art. Aethelwold is said to have cast the bells for Abingdon, and records show that while he was at Winchester he presented ten hanging bells to Peterborough.21

Another handicraft in which the monks made great progress was book-making and the copying of manuscripts. The fact that any Anglo-Saxon literature is preserved is probably the direct result of their energies during the tenth century. As has been said, the one extant manuscript of Beowulf was written in the tenth century. Among other manuscripts the Lindesfarne Gospels, a Latin version written about 700, and the Rushworth Gospels of a century later were saved through the reform. After 950
the interlinear Northumbrian gloss was added to the Lindesfarne Gospels, a gloss of greatest importance from a philological point of view as a key to the Northumbrian dialect of the middle of the tenth century. The gloss of the Rushworth Gospels dates from a slightly later time; the first half of it appears in North Mercian dialect, and the rest closely resembles the Lindesfarne Gloss. Although the libraries had suffered seriously during the Danish devastations and through the frequent burning of the wooden structures, yet some books remained, and influential people were interested in collecting more, and there were plenty of willing competent hands to do the work of copying. Then it was that the monks set to work to copy the good things that came to them. The style of penmanship developed during the years was clear and symmetrical. The results of the labors of the monks were such as to make English manuscripts in demand all over the Continent. England today has an enviable reputation for excellence in book-binding and the reason may be one thousand years old.

Although painting and sculpture were not essentially mediaeval arts, yet there was an attempt at painting in the tenth century which attained a high level. The characteristic turn taken by painting was in the illumination of manuscripts. So far as is known there is no record of mural painting, but the illustrating of manu-
scripts was worked out to a supreme degree. Many of the illuminations were executed by the writer himself; others were made by outsiders, who were not always monks, but sometimes secular scribes. The art was a direct inheritance from the Irish who at one time stood foremost among the world's illuminators. There is no specimen of the new school of Anglo-Saxon miniature which can be assigned to an earlier date than Aethelstan's reign, and no evidence that the new art developed with any rapidity before the middle of the century. After 980 a considerable amount of transcription and illumination must have been produced, notwithstanding the outside disquiet, turbulence, and war. After the beginning of Aethelwold's abbacy at Winchester, that institution became famous for the production of manuscripts, and afterwards became so differentiated in its methods that it headed an entirely new school in illumination.26

The pictures copied from the manuscripts show no suggestion of perspective. The figures are well-drawn, in stiff but rather life-like attitudes. The hands and feet appear unduly large; the draperies have a certain agitated stiffness in their folds; the hose are, characteristically, very wrinkled, and the shoulders lack erectness. Symmetry and balance, however, are not lacking and the distribution of the figures is pleasing.
The absence of a center of interest lends attractiveness to the whole, and emphasizes the story which the picture has to tell. The pictures are in no sense realistic, but they do have a symbolistic meaning which creates a realistic, concrete impression for the lines they illustrate.

One of these pictures which has a distinct historical bearing illustrates King Edgar offering up his charter for the New Minster, at Winchester, 966. The document itself, written throughout in gold, is in book form and has the picture for a frontispiece. The original is in the British Museum. There is a highly decorative border serving as a framework for the figures within the picture. Every feature of the illumination is full of symbolism which the tenth century monk's mind would readily grasp. Edgar, in a kneeling posture and with hands up-stretched, occupies the lower center of the group; St. Peter stands on one side and the Blessed Virgin on the other. Above, angels are circling about the throne upon which is seated Christ, whose identity is signified by the halo about his head. Edgar's face is marked by an expression of adoration; in fact, the whole picture gives the impression of piety and reverence; into this picture, too, some monk may have woven a bit of his soul.
Another work of beauty is a full-page miniature of the Crucifixion, prefixed to a tenth century Psalter, probably written at Winchester. It is drawn in reddish brown and pale-blue outline and, though it shows the characteristic faults, yet it displays a tenderness of feeling and a purity of line. The crispness of the Anglo-Saxon line soon became confused, however, as is shown in the illustrations of Aelfric's Paraphrase of the Pentateuch. These are colored drawings which show no attempt at naturalism but which are dramatic. The only background is the plain vellum page and there is no suggestion of landscape or atmosphere. The masterpiece of the time was the Benedictional of St. Aethelwold, written by Godeman, a monk of Winchester, about 975. This manuscript is enriched with thirty full-page miniatures. The treatment of faces is a little better than in the illumination of Edgar, and the borders give richer effects. In such a magnificent effort it is easy to trace a promise of the fame which came to England during the next century because of its high development in the art of illumination.

The phase of illumination carried out most in detail was the adornment of the initial letter in manuscripts. This offered choice for a delicacy or boldness of design, for a daintiness or deep richness in color, according to the temperament of the artist. Here was the imagination
allowed freedom in every sense of the word, and origi­
nality asserted itself in the production of many
exquisite and artistic letterings.

Not the least valuable, then, was the monk's work
not merely in keeping alive the art of illumination as
it had come to them from the Irish, but, furthermore,
in giving to it remarkable impulse for advancement.
This art was second in importance only to that great
branch of art which it was the aim of illumination to
serve; namely, literature; for after all, no matter how
suggestive the pictures might have been, nor how clearly
they were depicted, nor how many of the artist's per­
sonal or racial characteristics might have been brushed
into the forms represented, the illuminator had his
art's limitations, -- his work obviously must lack in
the continuity essential to reading his time clearly.
It is the literature of a time which writes a nation's
history, -- which sets forth a nation's ideals so clearly
that "he who runs may read". It is the literature of
tenth century England that depicts tenth century English
life, and that hands down to later ages the ideals and
temperament of the period. Furthermore, through even
the few extant writings of that century, is it quite
possible to trace the character of the Anglo-Saxons as
a people, through the previous centuries. But the
greatest of all reasons for assigning the supreme
accomplishment of the century to literature lies in the fact that in this field of monastic endeavor a definite step was made toward the crystalizing of the Anglo-Saxon into a real nation with a language of its own, a language capable of very high development. Just as Alfred the Great in the ninth century had succeeded in making a beginning in the use of the vernacular for literary purposes, so in the tenth century was Aelfric, a monk trained by St. Aethelwold at Winchester, successful in bringing the Anglo-Saxon language to a very high degree of literary value. Since about this monk centers the story of the last opportunity that Old English had, to grow and to assert itself, and since Aelfric is so essentially a result of the monastic reform movement, and since the products of his pen seem to have depended so entirely upon the previous diffusion of the revival, a few facts concerning his life may be in order, to show his place among the affairs and the great men of his time.

Of Aelfric's early life nothing definite is known. His birth, conjectured from certain later dates, is placed at 955, -- the year of the accession of Edwig, Edgar's predecessor, to the throne. From Aelfric's Preface to Genesis it seems quite certain that his early education was not entirely neglected, even though he considers it to have been carried on under rather
unfavorable circumstances. He says, "I once knew that a certain mass-priest who was my master at the time, had the book Genesis, and he could understand Latin to a certain extent; then he said concerning the patriarch Jacob, that he had four wives, two sisters and their two handmaids. Very truly he spoke, but he did not know, nor did I then, how much difference there is between the old law and the new." The exact date of his entrance into Winchester, the school of "the noble teacher Aethelwold", must have been sometime between 971 and the time of the building of the New Minster, 975; like most of the other dates, this, too, is uncertain. His time there could not have been unhappy, for he had a teacher whom he revered, and whom the other pupils must have loved. It will be remembered that Winchester excelled in the art of illumination at that time, an art connected closely with the transcribing of books to be illustrated, and the writing, in like manner doubtless, depending upon the reading and translating of other books. It is easy to imagine Aelfric happy in the midst of such work, learning the fundamental principles of what proved to be his life purpose. Then, too, his study of Latin under the tutelage of Aethelwold himself must have been thorough and pleasant, for his attraction toward Latin never ceased, his last penned words, a Pastoral Letter for Wulfstan, making use of that language. A statement
from Aelfric's Life of Aethelwold is significant in this connection, not only because it reveals at least one secret of Aethelwold's influence and Aelfric's appreciation of the congenial atmosphere at Winchester, but also because it suggests the sentiment which ruled Aelfric's own later teaching life: "It was a pleasure to him to be occupied in teaching children and youth, and to render books into English for them, and to exhort them with humorous talk to rise to better things. Hence it came about that many of his disciples became abbots or bishops among the English."28

The very phases of Aethelwold's personality suggested in the above passage are those which Aelfric shows most plainly in his own character as a teacher. The Colloquy, although written by Aelfric a number of years after his teaching experience began, reveals the fact that he too must have found pleasure in "the teaching of children and youth" and in the leading of their minds into the language that he liked in order that they might learn to like it too. Furthermore, his keen sense of humor, a sly, understanding humor, is apparent throughout the Colloquy. The "questioner" assumes the personality of Aelfric himself as he enters upon his duties as a teacher at Cernel in Dorsetshire. Although there is no record of his work there, nor any indication as to the identity of any of his pupils, it would seem safe
to say that he too was able to help those who came under his influence "to rise to better things". That he was sincere in his desire to educate in every way that he could is evidenced further in his Latin Grammar -- probably the first in the English tongue. The grammar was written after he had been teaching for some years, in the hope that it might be the means of aiding the cause of higher learning. He had no desire that learning should return to its former low ebb when "before the time of Archbishop Dunstan and Bishop Aethelwold no English priest was able to understand or compose an epistle". The sincerity of purpose, then, which expressed itself years later in his Grammar and Colloquium, must have been behind his work at Cerne and must have made his stay there worth while.

However much, though, Aelfric was interested in the actual teaching of schoolboys, it is very evident that he saw even a larger field for service and a call to greater need during his stay at Cerne. His contact with the outer world opened up to him all of the ignorance and the darkness prevalent. Doubtless, too, the priest recognized the fact that a king lacking in "rede" occupied the throne. Moreover, the end of the world was not far away; the people needed a leader to turn their minds toward things of spiritual significance, and toward their souls' salvation. Modestly and reluctantly he
assumed this leadership, and the Catholic Homilies were the result.

The Homilies, together with The Lives of the Saints, Translations from the Bible, Pastoral Letters, and the Life of Aethelwold, make up the principal fruits of the two decades after his trip to Cernel in 987. In 1005 he was appointed abbot of Eynsham, after which date very little definite information is obtainable. Aelfric's friendships through these years form an interesting part of his career. While he was at Cernel he became closely associated with Aethelweard, an ealdorman, who was kin to Byrhtnoth. After Aethelweard's death, the friendship with Aethelmaer, Aethelweard's son, was continued, his appointment to the abbacy of Eynsham being the result of Aethelmaer's influence and generosity. At Eynsham, Wulfgeat and Sigwerd were his friends. Inference places the date of his death about 1025.

But although little of the actual data concerning Aelfric reveals itself, the dominant purpose of his life shines out clearly. In giving him a place among the thinkers of his day, one writer says: "If Dunstan and Aethelwold first kindled the flame, it was Aelfric who, through dark years of strife and warfare, when men's thoughts were absorbed by the pressing anxieties of their daily life, kept the lamp alight and reminded them of spiritual ideals." He followed up the founding of
the churches, and the planting of new thoughts, with all the courage and reason of his being. His duty, once clear to him, he performed it unalteringly in spite of his sense of personal insufficiency, and his knowledge that "others were better fitted than he". His aim was simply to convey to the unlearned, to those without a knowledge of Latin, divine truths as he himself understood them, and as they were revealed through the church fathers. In his Preface to the first set of Homilies he states his purpose in transcribing those books thus: "I trust through the grace of God to translate this book from the Latin into the English tongue, not through confidence of great learning, but because I have seen and heard much error in many English books, which in their innocence, unlearned men have considered great wisdom. . . . Our Lord commanded his disciples to instruct all nations in the things which He Himself had taught them. . . . Because of such commands, it seems to me that I should not be guiltless in the sight of God if I were unwilling to make known to other men, either by word of mouth or in writing, the evangelical truth which He Himself spake, and afterwards revealed to holy teachers."\(^{19}\)

The Catholic Homilies composed by Aelfric for use in the churches on feast days and Sundays were composed in two sets, to be used alternately, "in order that they
might not become wearisome". Each set originally con­tained just forty sermons. The first now is given its correct number, but the second is made up of thirty-nine sermons with six of "a general" nature' appended. In the Latin Preface he says that he has only translated sense by sense in many places, and that he has used no difficult words. The Homilies comprise Scriptural interpretations, together with stories from lives of the saints. The Lives of the Saints, published later than the homilies, also gives incidents in the Saints' lives, as the title indicates.

A study of the Homilies and Lives of the Saints, as the pinnacle of the development of Anglo-Saxon prose, has a three-fold interest; the first to be noted is the reflection therein of the author's own character. In one of the Homilies occur these words expressive of the conviction which the reader must feel concerning Aelfric's sweet gentleness of character. "The Spirit of God ever directs to holiness and goodness; the spirit of the devil directs to sins of deeds and wickedness."29 Aelfric's sense of true values, his frank self-judgment, his meek­ness with no touch of servility, his willingness to do and his earnest active response to the call of duty are among the admirable qualities showing under the direction of which these two spirits Aelfric endeavored to keep his soul. Pride and vanity, evils against which he
admonishes others, seem to have no place in him. His honesty, and his appeal to the honesty of others, are not less prominent than the tact and the wisdom shown everywhere in his discourses; he may be mistaken in judgment owing to the limitations of his environment, but he is sincere in his opinions, and gives the truth as he sees it, with courage. Not the least interesting phase of his character is his sympathy -- kindly expressed -- in many of his homilies, a sympathy which must have been effective in its tenderness. He shows without attempting to show it, that he was "one of those who are little and humble in their hearts;" he unconsciously explains one reason at least for the veil of uncertainty that surrounds the material facts of his existence, when he says that "we should not publish our good deeds, but we should shun, with inward heart, vain pride, if we do some little good; because pride is a deadly sin." 

While Aelfric sought in no way to convey an impression of superior ability, neither did he endeavor to under-rate his powers, nor to evade an issue presented to him. The parable of the talents was one which he lived. He preached it in essence, asserting that "God gives his grade to whom he will". "To one man he gives wisdom and eloquence, to one good knowledge, to one great faith, to one power to heal the sick, to one prophetic power, to one discrimination of good and evil
spirits; to one he gives divers tongues, to one interpretation of divers things. He enlightened the heart of David, when in youth he loved the harp, and made him to be a Psalmist. There was a cow-herd called Amos, whom the Holy Ghost turned to a great prophet. Peter was a fisher whom the same Spirit of God turned to an apostle. Paul persecuted Christian men, whom He chose for instructor of all nations. Matthew was a toll-gatherer, whom He turned to an evangelist." And, furthermore, Aelfric makes use of his talent, with no regret for not possessing the ten; he practices what he preaches.

In his Preface to the Homilies he says, "I know a great many in this country more learned than I; but God declares His wonders through whom He will." 29

In an interesting discourse on Job, Aelfric states a comprehensive definition for an untruth: "In two ways men sin with their lips; that is, if they speak contrary to right, or silently withhold the right." 32 It is the first part of the definition he is fearful of violating in his translation of Genesis. "I say in advance that this book has a very profound spiritual signification, and I undertake to do nothing more than relate the naked facts -- I dare not write more in English than the Latin has, nor change the order except as far as the English idiom demands." 19 What a combination of characteristics make up the closing sentence of that same Preface,
innate honesty, simple frankness, courtesy, and a supreme desire to be obedient. "Now I protest that I neither dare nor will translate any book hereafter from Latin into English; and I beseech you, dear earl, not to urge me any longer, lest I should be disobedient to you, or break my word if I should promise."

Aelfric has no faith in "diabolical" charms, but rather seeks to explain wonders according to natural law. Speaking of the increased hardness of trees "felled during the full moon", he says: "This is no charm, but is a natural thing from their creation."

Miracles, as designs of God to make manifest His power, Aelfric asserts as belonging to the past, for "when faith had sprung up over all the world, then miracles ceased;" however, to Aelfric the triumph of good over evil is still as great a miracle as were the wonders wrought by the saints.

Although Aelfric's character shines through his sermons as saintly and pure, yet there is an understanding of evil which shows his goodness to be more than a passive kind,—a goodness which knew what it meant to combat against temptation. In a sermon on the temptation of Christ he declares the place which he assigns to evil in the world, a theory not unlike that of John Milton: "We shall not be perfect unless we be tempted; through temptation we shall thrive, if we ever resist the devil and all his precepts."
So thoroughly human is Aelfric in his sympathies that he readily perceives, and prevents as far as possible, those things which might count for the physical discomfort of his auditors. Just as skillfully does he recognize their mental limitations, and their spiritual lack. The tact, the perfect frankness, the fairness, the firmness, the scholarly way of viewing situations, all go to make Aelfric, as one authority puts it, "one of the sweetest characters in literature".

Just as it is possible to trace Aelfric's character through his sermons, so also is it possible to note in the same way some opinions of Aelfric which throw light on the historical view of the times. There will be no attempt at a discussion of his theological doctrines, although his theory of the Resurrection and his teaching as to the Holy Communion might lead into interesting studies. With a mind open and well-balanced, Aelfric must have been keenly alive to the political situations of the day. Since he counted among his friends Aethelweard, the father-in-law of Byrhtnoth, it is possible that his acquaintance also included the hero of Maldon, and he may have had a personal interest in the death of the noble warrior. Although Aelfric, for the most part, holds to his purpose to present only spiritual truths, it seems quite clear that the Danish invasions and civil disturbances are reflected in such statements as these:
"The Lord cheered us when he said; 'When ye hear of strife and battle in the world be not afraid.' Battle applies to foes, and strife to citizens. With those words he indicated that we should suffer war from without from our foes, and also from within from our neighbors, hateful dissensions." 35 "Though the cruel robber bereave us of our property, or deprive us of life, he cannot take from us our faith." "The people are made miserable by an unwise king, by many mischances, from his misguidance." 36

"Well may we thing how well it fared with us when this island was dwelling in peace, and the monastic orders were held in honor, and the laity were ready against their foes, so that our report spread widely throughout the earth. How was it then afterward when men rejected monastic life and held God's services in contempt, but that pestilence and hunger came to us, and afterward the heathen army had us in reproach?" 37

To Aelfric the strifes point only in one direction; namely, toward the day of doom. For this important day all are to prepare their hearts. The day is minutely described time after time, with its accompanying reward for the just and its eternal punishment for the wicked. "The common doom approaches daily, at which everyone will receive according to what he has merited." 38 "Verily
in these new days nations have arisen against nation and their affliction on earth has happened greater than we in old books read. . . . Let the remembrance of this day before your eyes, and whatsoever now appears to be trouble, it shall be mitigated in comparison with it. . . . Eschew evil and do good, and ye will be by so much the more secure at the advent of the eternal Judge, as ye now with terror anticipate his severity."39

The evils among the clergy, the Homilies set forth more in detail, but even these are never pronounced with anything other than Aelfric's usual tact. He puts the question of right fairly, and makes his appeal strong, but there is no suggestion of harangue, nor any lack of dignity. Instead of dwelling always on the fact that clerical life is debased and dissolute, he holds up the ideals which priests should strive to attain. "Now it is therefore for monastic men to shun with great care these evil examples, and to imitate the apostles, that they, with them and with God, may have everlasting life." Purity, temperance in all things, and the virtues of the centurion, "faith, humility, wisdom, and love,"31 he preached as essentials in the character of each monk, together with piety and obedience.

Aelfric's attitude toward books, teachers, and education in general would in itself form a study. To
teachers who through "book-learning" have come into knowledge of divine truths, he assigns the duty "to be ever watchful over God's flock". The characteristics which every teacher should possess are two, namely, "he should have learning, that he may instruct with wisdom, and he should, by good works, give good example to the people." The enthusiasm of fire and the meekness of a dove are essential qualities. "Every teacher shall render an account to God of the souls of all those which are committed to him, in addition to his own soul: then if the teachers teach well and give good examples they shall be saved. If they misteach, or give evil example, they destroy themselves." The mission of teaching he places upon bishops and mass-priests who "are set as criers, to announce the faith to lay people." That the seriousness of the position demanded proper training on the part of the teacher is evidenced in many passages. The one following is especially pointed; "How can the unlearned hold a teacher's authority and aptly preach to the lay-folk? Of these Jesus said to his disciples, 'If a blind man be another blind man's guide, then will they both fall into a pit.' Long shall he learn who is to teach, and have authority and obedience, lest he misguide the lay-folk with himself. That teacher has little authority, who with evil example makes void his preaching. . . . It is now needful to every one to learn of his teacher."
Ten Brink sums up the character of the great tenth century priest and teacher thus: "Aelfric was always the same in his aims, ideas, and manner of bringing them to practice. His knowledge might increase, his arguments gain in truth and stringency, but the essence of his nature as of his writing remained the same. From the beginning his was a finished, completely developed personality."43

This, then, introduces the third and, so far as the Renaissance is concerned, the most important part of Aelfric's career; that is, the form and devices in the Homilies and Lives of the Saints. First under this point is the question of sources. Basing judgment only on the sources openly stated from page to page, and not by any comparison with the originals, by far the greatest amount of borrowing comes from Gregory, the Great. St. Augustine and Bede are two other main sources. Some of the material is from Jerome, Haymo, Smragdus, and Josephus. Aelfric makes rather frequent reference to "books we have read," or "everywhere books are written that" -- indicating that his reading list may have included other authors of whom he has made no definite note in his Homilies. Of the work of Alfred the Great, he speaks highly.

Purpose as related to content has already been stated; namely, the instruction of the ignorant; purpose
as to form, then, must have manifested itself in an effort to make his teaching most effective. For the fulfilling of this object, Aelfric consistently makes use of a few devices which are marked in their strength of appeal. Through symbolism, he was able to demonstrate spiritual truths in a material way, to translate the divine into the human, to express in the language which the people knew, and in terms with which they were thoroughly familiar, the "signification" of Scriptural lessons. He allowed his imagination full play, just as the miniature painter must have done in his work, and his symbols are clear enough for even the simplest to understand. He was able to make the sea of Galilee "which Jesus passed over" the world known to the English people. "Rightly," he says, "is the sea compared to this world, for it is sometimes serene and pleasant to navigate on, sometimes also very rough and terrible to be on." What Anglo-Saxon of Aethelred's day would not realize that truth?

Through Aelfric's careful exposition of the feeding of the multitude, the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and "sayings of the Prophets," must have taken on a new meaning in the minds of the listeners. The five barley loaves signified the books of the law which were not understood until Christ came to reveal their hidden sense. The increase of the loaves betokened the influence these
books, through Christ, were to have on the world symbolized by the five thousand. The two fishes signified the Psalms and the books of the Prophets. The sitting of the multitude on the grass to eat the bread was an indication that in receiving spiritual instruction, the followers of Christ should so overpower their worldly inclinations. "The remainder of the refection, that is the depth of the doctrine, which secular men may not understand, that should our teachers gather, that it may not be lost, and preserve in their scrips, that is, in their hearts." The twelve baskets betokened the twelve apostles who "received the mysteries of the doctrine which the lay-folk could not understand."44

The number twelve had many other meanings aside from its apostolic significance, and a list of the various uses of the number is as follows: At the judgment day the twelve tribes of Israel will be judged; there are twelve hours in the day, twelve months in the year; there are twelve patriarchs, twelve prophets, twelve apostles. These were facts within the comprehension of even the most ignorant, but the number had a still greater import "beyond the wisdom of the unlearned". Thus is Aelfric's tendency made evident to keep the mystery, the same sense of "something beyond" present in the churches themselves, in the religion also.45

Nor does Aelfric depend upon a single statement of his symbolism to drive his truths home; many are repeated
a number of times. The fact that the whole universe acknowledged Jesus Christ when He came to earth, is one of those instances to which he refers more than once, each time almost word for word, the account of the recognition of all creatures, earth, heaven, sun, sea, stones, and even hell itself. Repetition does not frequently involve long passages, but more often consists in only brief descriptions, comparisons, or declarations.

But concrete, symbolic interpretations, and repetition are not the only means through which Aelfric would appeal to an audience; a third is the personal intimacy of tone pervading his sermons. He speaks as one friend to another, as one who has another's interests vitally at heart. Even though he is concerned primarily with their spiritual welfare, he does not allow his auditors to think that he is forgetful of their physical comfort, nor does he burden their mental faculties and their stock of patience by preaching to them facts that they cannot understand.

It is said that this same desire to strike a deep chord of response encouraged Aelfric to the rhythm which the third set of discourses, The Lives of the Saints, assumed. The Anglo-Saxons as a race responded to rhythm; their verse for centuries had been guided, instinctively, perhaps, by certain rules for rhythmic
construction; and it does seem possible that in thus assuming this "verse-prose or prose-verse" style, Aelfric was merely endeavoring to strengthen the force of appeal. Some critics hold the theory that Aelfric's unique prose style came as a result of the study of Latin constructions. Professor Saintsbury rejects this on the ground that "while Latin was equally well known in other countries, it did not produce the same effect in other vernaculars; and what is more important, the whole character of Old English rhythm is so different from that of Latin that imitation, beyond mere suggestion, is impossible." The Homilies have a certain balanced sentence form, and a decided tendency toward alliteration, but they retain a movement less ornate than the Lives of the Saints, following more closely the simple, straightforward style of Alfred, with whose translations Aelfric must have had an intimate acquaintance. Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the literary taste of rhythm and alliteration in prose, those qualities seem not to have detracted from the clearness of Aelfric's sermons, nor to have lessened the sympathetic appeal of the stories themselves. "They are not poems, but they bring into the church a form of story telling, applied to the lives of saints, that had been applied to deeds of heroes in the mead-hall. We can imagine the preacher
telling deeds of saints in the 'half-musical recitative' of the old gleemen, and arriving at much the same results as did they." No definite statement from the time of Aelfric has come down to our own day concerning the reception of these Homilies, but the very fact that manuscripts copied as late as the twelfth century have been found would indicate that they were appreciated and that they were not without influence.

Aelfric's place in literary history is rather difficult to estimate. There was little time for direct results from his influence before the Norman Conquest. But whatever those results might have been, his position with relation to his contemporaries and the Anglo-Saxon writers who had preceded him, is clear. He it was who brought his vernacular to its very highest development in prose. He gave little of original thought to the world, but his way of putting what he did write was decidedly original, as his prefaces, especially, show. Of Aelfric's work, by far a greater amount is extant than any of his contemporaries. A man of Dunstan's importance must have written much, but very little, if any of his writing now exists. Aethelwold, who, too, must have been an earnest writer, has little to show for his literary labor, the translation of the Benedictine rule being perhaps the most significant. Of
Aelfric, however, there is enough to show him to have been a prolific writer, in spite of the possibility that some of his work may have been lost. One writer assigns to Aelfric the distinction of being "not only the greatest prose writer, but the most distinguished English writing theologian in his own time and for five centuries afterwards" — the time of Wycliffe. His work as a teacher, as a preacher, and as a writer, although not brilliant, was sincere and thoroughly adequate.

The characteristic prose literature, then, reflects very strongly the religious force behind it; war furnishes the inspiration for the highest poetic attainments of the century. The two poems which alone bring fame to the time are in celebration of battles, the first, The Battle of Brunanburh, an exultant song of victory, the second, The Battle of Maldon, a poem of heroic defeat. Both have Christian elements; both have pagan. Each has as a strong quality the love of fight, and reveals the seriousness of battle. The former poem reflects the spirit of its time of national hopefulness; the latter betrays the suggestion of national weakness. In Aethelstan's triumph resounds the loyalty of man to lord, the hatred of treason being directed against outsiders; in Byrhtnoth's downfall the loyalty to lord is as great, but there is record of treachery within the camp, — a coward has appeared. The Battle of
Brunanburh interprets an Anglo-Saxon battle spirit, viewed through monastic walls, as it were; the later poem pictures in a most realistic manner the battle just as it must have entered into the experience of the poet. Both suggest hand to hand conflict in all of its butchery, the "hacking" and the "hewing" of human bodies. Moreover, as far as form is concerned, both follow the typical Anglo-Saxon versification, with alliteration and rhythm, although the degrees of their accuracy vary.

The Battle of Brunanburh, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle record for the year 937, was probably the work of a monk whom the news of victory had inspired to lyric verse. The form is polished and smooth, and the versification accurate. The rapid movement carries the reader into the very spirit of victory, a power felt even through a translation. Tennyson in his translation has caught the spirit of the old-time poem with remarkable skill. The poem reveals many Anglo-Saxon characteristics, many features essentially connected with Anglo-Saxon institutions as they are set forth in the earlier poem, Beowulf. The first of these is the use of the kenning, which appears prominently. The old idea of gift-giving, loyalty to kin, hatred of treachery, hesitancy to speak of death, and glory in battle, all of these are points which this poem holds in common with Beowulf.
While The Battle of Brunanburh shows lyric qualities, and better preservation of purely metrical form than the later poem, The Battle of Maldon is unadorned, and has greater dramatic force. To remember the historical background of Byrhtnoth's fight is to call to mind Byrhtnoth's lord, Aethelred, who was not a participant in the battle, and the wave of patriotic feeling seems to swell all the more broadly. The tribute which Aethelred paid a little later to buy off the Danes, Byrhtnoth and his men fought to the death to avoid. Although the poem is only a fragment, and the work of an anonymous writer, enough remains to give an insight into the stirring occasion: the invasion of the Danes, the valiant rallying of the Saxons under Byrhtnoth as he directs the battle formation, the defiant shouting from side to side, "the time of glorious deeds" and the doing of those glorious deeds, the death of Byrhtnoth, the efforts of his followers to take revenge or die, all are pictured in rapid succession. The battle is fought again through the poet's mind, warrior or monk, whichever he may have been.

The characters of two nations are set forth: the Vikings, sea-rovers and robbers, the Saxons, defenders of treasures and honor, who would give "no tribute but the spear". Byrhtnoth dead, his thanes fought the more hotly:
"'Twas fiercest moot! The warriors steadfastly
In battle stood and wounded fell. On earth was
slaughter dire." 48

Aside from loyalty to lord, other features contribute
to the general notion of Anglo-Saxon spirit as shown
in pagan days. Reference to mead-hall scenes with
boasting and drinking, utter submission to fate, and
mention of the eagle and raven are among other pagan
remnants. Courage, honor, and faithfulness to an oath
are as strong as in Beowulf, as is also hatred of cow­
ardice, exemplified by Godric. The hero of Maldon,
however, has evidenced a new trait, not pagan in its
foundation, for at his death he utters a prayer to the
Christian God.

Taking the best of both prose and poetry into
consideration, the last days of Old English were not
days of utter decay, but rather did they furnish a high
degree of linguistic development. In spite of the fact
that one thousand years have intervened and that two
distinct changes have come to the English language since
the time of Aelfric and the two tenth century war poems,
that period of literary achievement is still of impor­tance. The tenth century produced enough in letters
for the modern reader to be able to interpret Old
English in its last stages, and to read between the
lines the qualities which have kept the language of
Britain, English, regardless of outside influences.
The fact in the tenth century English Renaissance, however, which holds the most for present day living, and which links that early period with our very own time does not concern itself merely with literary results, significant as they are, nor with any of the other cultural attainments of that revival of learning. It is the monastic aim, the unselfish devotion to a cause which seemed to the monks the cause of civilization and righteousness, the obedience to duty with no hope of nor desire for earthly recognition,--it is this phase of the Renaissance which offers the worthiest ideal to the twentieth century. The tangible results of the movement each generation works out in its own way, for the most part, with an advancement; the aim, no generation has yet wholly attained. The Benedictine vows, generally observed, probably would not furnish a practical basis for a strong social organization, but the sincerity of the monks behind their taking of the vows offers as great an opportunity for right living as it did ten centuries ago.

The monks made no effort to monachize the world; neither was service to humanity as an end in itself, their purpose. The endowing of a school with great gifts bringing fame to the giver, the founding of a library with the donor's name above the door, doubtless would be matters entirely outside the monastic guiding
principle, for the accumulation of wealth, in the first place, would be foreign to that principle. The building up of a mighty industry, an enormous factory, perhaps, and that surrounded by the over-crowded, unhygienic homes of the factory workers, would not be possible with the universal acceptance of the monastic aim to feed the hungry, even the "stranger within their gates" who would have no opportunity to render service in return. A large mining corporation, under a monastic administration, would see to it that no worker was needy, and would see that none of the returns from the mines should be allowed to accumulate, only for the furthering of the industry in order that it might accomplish more good; hence would the main cause of strikes be obviated. The "bread line" of nation-wide reputation today is a counterpart of the philanthropy of Benedictine houses. Whatever the station of the monk, whatever the labor he performed, or whatever the fortune or misfortune of a chance visitor whom it was the monks' duty to care for, the same unselfishness was apparent, the same sincerity toward individual perfection, the same spirituality of purpose.

Modern commercialism, the acquisition of riches as a dominating factor in life, might find much worth while in the unworldly ideal of monasticism to counteract the eager, sordid pursuit of wealth, a pursuit which
allows too little place for intellectual or spiritual enlightenment. It might find, whether in manufacturing, or preaching, or driving a coal-wagon, the secret of proper balance between the material and the spiritual; it might discover the futility of underpaying labor, with resulting pauperism and crime. The rural commercialist might come to a realization of the folly involved in a mad craving for luxuries which make for only temporary enjoyment to the exclusion of those things which contribute to intellectual development, or which have, to use Aelfric's words, "spiritual signification". The purchase of another half-section of land by a farmer already well-to-do might not be considered of greater importance than the buying of books for a struggling library or the installing of books into his own home; he might recognize the inconsistency lying in the possession of the most modern farming implements in a district where the school equipment is most meager and where no other provision than the school is made in the community for the elevation of mind or soul. The whole desire, wherever it exists, for material pleasures, might, with only a faint spark of the monk's ideal of individual perfection, and his enthusiastic following up of that ideal, convert itself into a truer sense of values and a deeper understanding of what is essential in life.
The tenth century in England opened in the midst of a dearth of learning; it ended with learning still not sown broadcast but with cultural facilities widespread. In his endeavor toward other-worldliness the monk's influence on this world had manifested itself. With unflagging persistence he lived the right life as he saw it, thoughtfully and sincerely; the advancement he was able to produce through that same spiritual zeal furnishes hope for the future welfare of this country where opportunities for enlightenment are much greater than they were in the "mother country" during the last Anglo-Saxon days. The monk's vision has come down to modern times as a gleam from the so-called "dark ages", as a vision belief in which is capable of saving and advancing nations. King Solomon observed some seven hundred years before the birth of Christ that "where there is no vision the people perish". The monk's ideal embodies that vision for twentieth century people this very day; and although the ideal does not comply with present day institutions and conditions generally, the spirit of that ideal, the soul behind the vision, is still of inestimable value as a factor in civilization.
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