

THE ROOTS OF THE TREE OF LEARNING*

THE gradual deterioration of the true purpose of a university has taken place within three generations at most. The change, however, became noticeable about the time when Mark Pattison was Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Almost a century ago, that great scholar said:

The colleges were, in their origin, endowments, not for the elements of a general liberal education, but for the prolonged study of special and professional faculties by men of riper age. The universities embraced both these objects. The colleges, while they incidentally aided in elementary education, were specially devoted to the highest learning. . . .

This was the theory of the middle-age university and the design of collegiate foundations in their origin. Time and circumstances have brought about a total change. . . . Here and there college walls may shelter an occasional student but not in larger

proportions than may be found in private life. Elementary teaching of youths under twenty is now the only function performed by the university, and almost the only object of college endowments. Colleges were homes for the life-study of the highest and most abstruse parts of knowledge. They have become boarding schools in which the elements of the learned languages are taught to youths.¹

Since Pattison's day, the exact sciences have received more attention in many institutions than was given to them when Tyndall and Huxley imagined that we were embarked upon the seas of invention, bound for the regions of scientific discovery. And now, for a full generation, we have been tempest tossed, and the barque of learning is driving fast before the gales of war and soon will be a helpless wreck upon the rocks of statecraft and nationalism. It is strange that such a transformation could take place in so short a time, but many saw it coming, although their warnings went unheeded.

The real reasons for the change are not far to seek; they lie in the disordered thought of the modern conception of the purpose of man. He has cut adrift from the line of tradition and knows not how he came to be nor how he has reached the place he occupies in the world today. The thought cultivated in so many of our educa-

tional institutions—that the child must express himself and that he must be given every opportunity to reveal his *true* character—is directly contrary to all the ideas held by the great educationists of the past; for they believed that education was a discipline of the mind and taught the child the exercises of self-control, thereby enabling him to avoid the pitfalls of ignorance and unseemly behavior. Strange as it may seem to the men who today foster the notions that the future begins with us and that we have nothing to learn from the past, it may be pointed out that there were giants of scholarship long ago who, while expressing themselves, at the same time revealed in their characters a greatness that is sadly missing in those who attempt to lead us today.

However, the tree of learning is not yet uprooted. There are branches on its trunk and, although the skepticism and occasional derision of our time have blighted the leaves and broken some twigs, the roots are still firmly embedded in the soil of our culture. Therefore, while there is time, perhaps it is not amiss to turn our attention to the sources from which we derive all that is best and praiseworthy in what is left to us today. The culture of Christendom is a romance which is woven into the texture of our

life and thought so closely that it is almost impossible to dissociate it from the achievements of our people. When we look back upon the origins of our life of learning, we see a long line of men who sacrificed everything to enable their fellows to raise themselves from the mire of vandalism and darkness of mind to the highest planes of humility and refinement. And it is to the records of the Church, the universities, and the first schools that we must turn when we wish to trace the story of our mental and spiritual emancipation. Let us, then, in brief space journey back once more to the beginnings of our attempts to gain knowledge and the disciplines that taught us how to use it.

There are so many works by scholars, dealing with what are called the "Dark Ages" (say from the fifth century to the tenth), that it seems strange that there are writers of our day who ignore these findings; for they have placed before us what is perhaps the most interesting section of the history of learning of this era. A complete bibliography of the books that have been written during the past fifty years, in which we can trace the beginnings of our search for knowledge would fill an entire volume. It would not be a list exclusively British and Irish; it would include many of the scholars of France,

Spain, Germany, and Italy. To these also we should add the names of some erudite American writers whose works are scarcely ever mentioned by those authors who now refer to the past in their works on education and its history.

Toward the close of the fifth century there arose in Ireland several centers of learning. To mention only one, the school of Armagh was noted as a place "thronged by scholars from Britain as from Ireland." For those who shy at the very thought of going to the authorities on this subject, there is a most informative book by Winifred M. Letts, called *St. Patrick the Traveling man*.² The work of St. Patrick in Ireland coincided with that of St. Benedict in Italy. Both men had to wrestle with conditions so similar in confusion, corruption, and despair that the marvel of it is they were able to implant systems of order and inspire their followers to build their edifices of hope and security. The two centers of spiritual relief founded by these men—Armagh and Monte Cassino—have been magnets that have attracted and riveted the thought of many of the greatest scholars of Christendom. It is a simple enough task for us to turn to our catalogues and find the names of great men, within and without the Church, who have devoted volumes to the traveling man of God,

St. Patrick. But it is not so easy for us to turn to those of other peoples and discover the legion of foreign commentators who have contributed their profound researches in eulogies as great as those of learned Irishmen.

So it is with St. Benedict. All Europe west of the Vistula, through these fourteen centuries, has contributed libraries upon the amazing work that he performed. In scanning the lists of authors who have written upon the life of the founder of Monte Cassino, one notes with peculiar interest how widely some of them differed in their views of religious establishments. Bossuet praised the Benedictine code in the following words:

This *rule* is an epitome of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of all the doctrines of the gospel, all the institutions of the Holy Fathers, and all the counsels of perfection. Here prudence and simplicity, humility and courage, severity and gentleness, freedom and dependence, eminently appear. Here, correction has all its firmness; condescension all its charm; command all its vigor, and subjection all its repose; silence its gravity, and words their grace; strength its exercise, and weakness its support; and yet always, my Fathers, he calls it *a beginning*, to keep you always in holy fear.³

From the beginnings of the schools in Ireland (of which Armagh was the center) and the

foundation of Monte Cassino by Benedict, the first steps were taken to preserve the Latin of the Fathers and some of the classical writers for the heritage enjoyed by those who carried on the tradition. Even through the most discouraging vicissitudes, a tradition was established which was never really broken even in the darkest hours. We learn from one of the most profound students of that period that, over western Europe, schools arose which maintained the deep foundations laid by the scholars of the sixth century. That renowned authority on the Dark Ages, Professor Ker, says:

. . . The history of Latin is the history of education, and follows the great schools. There is a line from Ireland and Iona to Jarrow and York, and from there to the Court of Charles. Alcuin's school at Tours is the parent of the school at Fulda where Hraban carried on the same work. Different lines of descent are united at Reichenau and St Gall, which are in relation with the newer school at Fulda on the one hand, and with the Irish on the other. Bede (Jarrow) taught Egbert (York), who taught Alcuin (Tours), who taught Hraban (Fulda), who taught Walafriid Strabo (Reichenau): that pedigree roughly indicates one of the chief lines along which literary studies were carried. . . .⁴

Only by harking back to the hinterland of more famous schools, which served as a nucleus

for the universities, can we understand the mighty work done in the midst of chaos. These single-minded men of the Church provided opportunities to restore men's reason by leading them to associate together in labor and prayer. The schools of the Dark Ages were the roots from which the stalwart tree of knowledge grew to cover cultural mankind with its protecting branches.

At first "the cathedral school taught only what was supposed to be necessary for the education of the priest; the monastic school taught only what was supposed to be in harmony with the aims of the monk."⁶ But think of what grew out of this simple beginning! Even in the darkest time there were defenders of knowledge who sacrificed all material gain and comfort for the sake of learning. That there is a tradition which should be preserved and honored there is no doubt. Ker says:

. . . In spite of depression and discouragement, there was a continuity of learning even in the darkest ages and countries. Certain school-books hold their ground with little fluctuation of popularity, keeping an honourable position as representatives of classical culture. Martianus Capella *On the Nuptials of Mercury and Philology*; Fulgentius, *Mythologiarum Libri iii.*; Orosius, *Historiarum adversum Paganos*

Libri vii.; Boethius *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*; and later Isidorus of Seville, with a number of other authors, are found in the ages of distress and anarchy more or less calmly giving their lectures and preserving the standards of a liberal education. . . .⁶

It may come as a shock to many men in our universities who are victims of the prejudice and misunderstanding of writers of the time of the French Revolution—writers who denounced the achievements of the past—to learn that some of the greatest scholars of the nineteenth century found the Dark Ages not so benighted as they have been pictured. Ker remarks:

So it may be assumed as proven that at any rate in some common matters and manners of education the Dark Ages were not remarkably inferior to these more brilliant periods; not wholly distinct, in their educational tastes, from the age of Plato or the age of Bacon. The Dark Ages did not invent their absurdities. The elementary classical commonplaces, the popular methods of explanation, are preserved and continued during the Dark Ages. If there is anything ludicrous in them, it belongs almost as much to the days of Queen Elizabeth or Louis XIV. as to the early mediæval centuries.⁷

It was the schools that preserved the continuity of the learning which came down from Boethius; and what would be the literature of

the Middle Ages without the *Consolation of Philosophy*? Dante quoted the Roman philosopher, and it is said that he can be traced in English literature from *Beowulf* to *Hamlet* and *Lycidas*. How few know, or at least show that they know in their writings, when his name is mentioned, that Ser Lapo Mazzei, a Florentine notary of the end of the fourteenth century, regarded the *Consolation* as a work of the highest philosophy. "To-day," Mazzei remarked, "simple people hold it cheap, because it is a common book for the youngest pupils in our schools."⁸

The schools of Cassiodorus,⁹ founded in the monasteries erected by him in his ancestral domains at Squillace during the first half of the sixth century, were models copied by all those who gave instructions to the young in the seven liberal arts. *Institutiones Divinarum et Humanarum Litterarum* has been called an encyclopedia of sacred and profane literature for the monks, and a sketch of the seven liberal arts. In it are to be found instructions for using the library, which was acknowledged by Montague James¹⁰ to be the largest of that time. No matter where we look in those days of disorder and ignorance, we find records of schools so firmly established that even the rage and disasters of the centuries to come could not wholly destroy them.

Strangely enough, the intellectual giant of the so-called Dark Ages has left no record of the school in which he was educated. It is now established that Erigena was an Irishman and that his knowledge of Greek must have been acquired in the monasteries of Ireland, for at that time they were the "only places in Europe where the study of Greek survived in those dark and turbulent days." Hauréau says that, at the end of the sixth century, from the banks of the Rhine to the gorges of the Pyrenees, there was no longer a remote corner where the scourge of the barbarian had not penetrated. Ireland alone, protected by a double sea, had not yet submitted to the invasion of the foreigners.¹¹

Yet, at this time Erigena sallied forth and journeyed to the court of Charles the Bald. There he found the palace schools, which dated from the days of Charlemagne and Alcuin. The palace school at first was a seminary for the young princes and, at the same time, something of an academy for the Emperor's courtiers.¹² Degérando says of Erigena:

... L'apparition d'un tel homme, à une telle époque, est à tous égards un phénomène extraordinaire: on croit rencontrer un monument de l'art debout au milieu des sables du desert.¹³

Even to this day we are still discussing the questions that engrossed the mind of this Celtic philosopher.

For those who hold to the notion that there were no collectors of books before Petrarch and the so-called Humanists, it might be interesting to mention Alcuin, the celebrated ecclesiastic and man of learning of the eighth century, who was educated at the cathedral school of York and who went with his master, Aelbert, to Rome, in search of manuscripts. Many of the books in the fine library at the palace of Charlemagne were perhaps collected by the teacher from York.¹⁴ After serving the king at his court for some years, he was appointed head of the great abbey of St. Martin at Tours. There he made the school a model of excellence. Students flocked to it, and Alcuin had numerous manuscripts copied, the calligraphy of which is of extraordinary beauty, according to Léopold Delisle in his *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*.¹⁵

An instruction dated the 23rd of March, 789-90, was issued by Charlemagne at Aachen, in which he urged the monks and also the secular canons "not only to get together children of slaves but also the sons of freemen, and take them into their societies." In this document we read that he directed that

schools of reading boys should be established in every monastery and cathedral, where psalms, music, arithmetic and grammar, and the writing of good editions of books should be taught; not allowing the boys, however, to corrupt the gospels, psalters or mass books by reading or writing, but employing men of full age for that purpose.¹⁶

In a comparatively new study, Dr. R. H. Hodgkin, Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, devotes many pages to the history of the schools up to the time of Alfred's death. This work, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*,¹⁷ is one that should be read by those who are now instructing the young. Hodgkin deals fearlessly—it might be said ruthlessly—with much of the interpretation of historians treating of this period, who wrote as late as two generations ago. He is precise in evaluating data, even to the extent of taking much of the romance out of the story of the Anglo-Saxon settlement in Britain. Nevertheless, he makes it clear that great things were done in those days. How English thought was transformed within the period of six generations was something of an educational miracle. The descendants of Wotan (and one of the most curious bits in chronology is his tables of the descent of Mercian and the West Saxon kings, showing the line claimed by them from the god of Thun-

der) produced the men of learning of that day. Hodgkin says that Alcuin in his poem, *Carmen de Pontificibus*,

makes it clear that the students were led through the subjects of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) to those of the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). Works of Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, and Pliny, as well as those of the Christian Fathers were in the library at York. *The boys not only read Virgil, but they were encouraged to write Latin verses themselves.*¹⁸ (Italics mine)

These three schools—the one at York, at Tours, and the royal palace of Charlemagne—revolutionized the system of education and gave inspiration to the hundreds of similar bodies that came to life all over Europe. They bequeathed to the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries the treasures gathered by those whose works had survived the centuries of ignorance and disunion.

However, we must not forget the schools of Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Canterbury. Benedict Biscop, who founded the two former schools in the seventh century, journeyed five times to Rome, and each time came back with art treasures and a goodly store of books.¹⁹ Indeed, it may be said that the search for knowledge at that time was a far more difficult task than

it was some centuries later when the Humanists of the Renaissance set to work. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the book-collecting of the Dark Ages was not undertaken merely to satisfy the aesthetic need of an individual; it was all done for the benefit of schools. We know what the African abbot, Hadrian, did for education at Canterbury. He was well versed in both Latin and Greek; and he also taught verse-making, music, astronomy, arithmetic, and medicine. Pupils from all parts gathered at the school; afterwards many became famous in the Church. One great example is John of Beverley. Perhaps the most distinguished of all, from the literary standpoint, was Aldhelm.

In the story of the growth of the schools of the seventh and eighth centuries, we find a totally different conception of education from that which exists today. Then, it was already a question of knowledge for knowledge's sake. There was no idea of instituting a school for the purpose of teaching a boy how to make a living. No one would have dreamed of such a thing; and perhaps the reason why these schools held on in the darkest days and survived the iniquities of war was that knowledge was dearer to them than life. Life without it was not worth defense. Surely the journeys the monks took—the risks of

travel, the heat, the cold, the hunger, the thirst they endured—are sufficient proof of the value they put upon the work they were doing.

Men were educationists in that day, and their students included boys of ten and twelve as well as men and women of the court, who were just as eager to be instructed as the lads themselves. Dr. Montague James gives us a description of the book-collecting and the libraries to be found at the abbey schools in Europe.²⁰ The deeper one plunges into this history, the greater is his amazement at the achievements wrought. How little we know today of the tradition of our thought and the works it has produced! Professor Christian Pfister says:

In art as well as in literature the seventh century and beginning of the eighth are marked by a profound decadence. But just at the period of blackest barbarism the Frankish kingdom came into contact with Italy, the mother of arts and sciences, where the monuments of antiquity were preserved; and with England, where the monks still studied in their cloisters, and where the Venerable Bede had founded a school of worthy disciples. The Anglo-Saxons and the Italians brought to the Franks the treasures they had safely guarded; the Emperor Charles the Great recognised that it belonged to the duties of his office to spread enlightenment, to foster art and literature; and at length, after this night of dark-

ness, there shone forth the brilliance of a true renaissance.²¹

Now we come to Bede, whom Burke called "the father of English learning." Here was a man whose life was spent in devotion and study. He began, as a little boy, taking his place among the pupils of the monastic school. He was ordained a deacon at nineteen and, at that age, revealed a remarkable capacity for learning. At Wearmouth he found what has been called "the noble library of books collected by Benedict Biscop," and to it he added, year by year, not only works from his own pen but many brought to the abbey by travelers from Europe. So famous was the school that students flocked to it from all parts, and the fame of Bede was known wherever scholars gathered. At the end of his great work, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*,²² he gives us a list of the books that he wrote. He labored to the last. John Richard Green says:

First among English scholars, first among English theologians, first among English historians, it is in the monk of Jarrow that English literature strikes its roots. In the six hundred scholars who gathered round him for instruction he is the father of our national education. In his physical treatises he is the first figure to which our science looks back. . . .²³

There seems to be no limit to the extent of Bede's studies. In Dr. Giles' edition of Bede's works, one volume of the twelve is devoted to his scientific treatises.²⁴ And Sharon Turner in his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* says: "He collected and taught more natural truths with fewer errors than any Roman book on the same subjects had accomplished."²⁵

When Alfred became king, the condition of the centers of learning was lamentable. The invasions had cut sad trails of destruction, and it seemed as if the England of the Saxons would never recover from the havoc and desolation. The Danish Wars left her crippled and hopeless. But Alfred set to work to restore what was lost and to revive once more centers of learning. In the preface to his translation of Pope Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, he remarks on the happy times that prevailed when the people obeyed God and His ministers:

... They on the one hand maintained their peace and morality and their authority within their borders, while at the same time they enlarged their territory abroad; and how they prospered both in war and in wisdom; and also the sacred orders, how zealous they were both in teaching and in learning and in all the services which they owed to God; and how foreigners came to this land for wisdom and

instruction; and how we now should have to get them from abroad if we were to have them. . . .

When I considered all this I remembered also how I saw, before it had all been ravaged and burnt, how the churches throughout all England stood filled with treasures and books. . . .²⁶

Later, he announced to Bishop Werferth²⁷ a new scheme for the education of "all the youth now in England of free men . . . until they are able to read English writing well."²⁸

Hodgkin says that Alfred's search for knowledge was just as intense toward the close of his life as it had been in the early days. And he quotes the famous statement of the king:

Enjoy the wisdom which thou hast, and have joy in the part which thou canst. I would know whether after the parting of the body and the soul I shall ever know more than I now know of all that which I have long wished to know; for I cannot find anything better in man than that he know, and nothing worse than that he be ignorant.²⁹

What education did for Alfred is a revelation of what it is possible for a man to do today, even after he has left school or university. Happily there are still men who have sufficient sense in reading the Anglo-Saxon story to put out of their minds some of the deterrent intellectual prejudices of our time. Those who can transport

themselves back to the days before the Norman conquest, and take up such a work as Sharon Turner's,³⁰ may enjoy his story of the great transformations from paganism to Christianity. His analysis of the running commentary of Alfred, when translating the *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius, is an excellent exercise, but it cannot be enjoyed if every statement of the king which seems trite to our schoolmen is judged by the intellectual canons of our day. It must be remembered that the translation was made by a king who lived in the ninth century.

It is difficult for us, now that everything is made so easy for the willing scholar, to appreciate the great value these early schools had for those who were struggling out of the darkness into light. Professor James Bass Mullinger points out that

between the pagan system and the Christian system, by which it had been superseded, there yet existed something that was common to both: the latter, even in the narrow and meagre instruction which it imparted, could not altogether dispense with the ancient text-books, simply because there were no others in existence. Certain treatises of Aristotle, of Porphyry, of Martianus Capella and of Boethius continued consequently to be used and studied; and in the slender outlines of pagan learning thus still kept in view, and in the exposition

which they necessitated, we recognize the main cause which prevented the thought and literature of classic antiquity from falling altogether into oblivion.³¹

These were the starting points of a system of study and instruction which made it comparatively easy, three or four hundred years later, for universities to be founded on the bedrock of the schools.

It was at Salerno in Italy that the first European university grew into being. Although Dean Rashdall tells us that the circumstances of the start made at Salerno are "veiled in impenetrable obscurity,"³² some recent researchers trace its inception to Monte Cassino. Jourdain remarks that, long prior to the time when Constantine the African began to deliver his lectures on medicine, the pupils at Salerno were instructed in that science.³³ Mullinger says that, under the teaching of Constantine,

the fame of Salerno as a medical school became diffused all over Europe; it was distinguished also by its catholic spirit, and, at a time when Jews were the object of religious persecution throughout Europe, members of this nationality were to be found both as teachers and learners at Salerno. . . .³⁴

Before the close of the thirteenth century, Bologna was famous for the teaching of both

civil and canon law. At Pavia there was another famous school: the one to which Lanfranc went to study law. Macdonald says:

The Lombard lawyers of the eleventh century divided their attention between the old Lombard dooms and Roman law. The Pavian lawyers, especially, "had been harmonizing, digesting and modernizing the ancient statutes of the Lombard kings."³⁵

No one seems to know when the school of Pavia³⁶ came into being, but it had been in existence a long time before Lanfranc became one of its students. Lanfranc's career in this story of the schools shines out like a bright beacon in a dark night. After he left Lombardy and began his travels, it is said that he opened schools which attracted students in the places through which he passed. At Avranches he remained for some time and, at the cathedral school, students gathered round him. Then he wandered to Bec, situated on a small river in the Brionne valley. Herluin received him and, after a short time, Lanfranc set to work with his own hands to assist the monks in erecting a furnace. From this meeting and the close association of the abbot and Lanfranc there grew up the great abbey at Bec which was to become so rich and famous. Bec became the seminary at which the leading ec-

clesiastics of England and Normandy were educated, and its students passed out into France, Germany, and Italy, wherever the work of Church reform was destined to flourish.

We learn something of the scope of the training given at Bec from the work described by Lanfranc. He tells us that the schools provided departments for boys as well as for older students and advanced scholars. Macdonald emphasizes this by declaring:

... All branches of education received attention, including the instruction of boys in the elements of knowledge; the training of professed monks in theology, and perhaps in medicine and law [surely in law! for Lanfranc was probably the best trained lawyer in that part of Europe]; training for works of research and scholarship, such as the writing of history and biography and the compilation of theological treatises. In addition, a regular part of the life of some members of the community was the copying of manuscripts and the correction of biblical and patristic texts.³⁷

When we come to the early part of the twelfth century, we find that William of Champeaux started a school in Paris for the more advanced study of dialectic as an art, and among his pupils was Abélard, who became the founder of the schools of Montagne Ste Geneviève; there

began a new development in the course of logic. But it was not until the second decade of the thirteenth century that the schools at Paris began to shape themselves for the richer and wider distinction of *Studium generale*. The abbot of the monastery of Ste Geneviève in 1255 appointed a chancellor whose duty it should be to confer *licentia docendi* on those candidates who were desirous of opening schools in that district. The bestowal of this license by the chancellor of Notre Dame was the first step taken to create the University of Paris. It was Abélard, about whom the students gathered with such enthusiasm, who laid the foundations of the university that was to arise from the schools of Ste Geneviève and Notre Dame.³⁸

Now we must leave the great work done by the schools and turn our attention to the founding of Oxford. There is no doubt that schools were there before the beginning of the twelfth century, but it was not until after 1170 that they were accorded an importance as great as that of those upon the Seine. There was a sudden migration from Paris to Oxford at that time, and Sir Charles Mallet says: "When Becket lay dead by the altar-steps at Canterbury, the life of the first of English Universities had begun."³⁹

Here we shall follow the direction that Mallet takes and use his language in sketching briefly the history of Oxford University. He informs us that

. . . A degree was originally nothing but a license to teach. All qualified persons were entitled to the license and were expected to undertake the duty. There was at first little or no distinction between the styles of Master, Doctor and Professor, while a Bachelor, though allowed to lecture after spending some years in study, was still regarded as a young man serving his apprenticeship in the world of letters. . . . The Master or Head of the Schools became in most cases a member of the Cathedral body. . . .⁴⁰

The ceremony of conferring a mastership differed somewhat from what we witness now at commencement.

. . . The scholar received the Master's book. The Master's ring was placed on his finger. The Master's cap was set on his head. And then, ascending the Master's chair, and receiving his old teacher's kiss and benediction, he proceeded to show his quality in his inaugural address. But in return for his adoption he had to pay his footing, to entertain his new colleagues as liberally as his fortunes would allow, and to find such contributions of gowns or gloves or money as custom sanctioned and good fellowship required.⁴¹

It is to a Legatine Ordinance of 1214, which is still preserved in the Tower of Archives, that we must turn to find the first mention of the university. Mallet says:

But if at the beginning of the thirteenth century the organisation of the University was still undeveloped, its rights not yet defined by charter, its customs not yet stereotyped in Statutes, it already enjoyed a full and vigorous life.

Then he adds:

Hundreds of students thronged the narrow lanes—little fellows still learning Latin in the grammar schools, older boys of fifteen or sixteen already started on their University careers, youths in the first flush of manhood, eager for mysteries to solve, for worlds to conquer, and ripe for any mischief that hot blood could suggest. Poverty and hardship were not unknown among them. Some perhaps went hungry, and some were meanly lodged. Cold and darkness, when the winter days descended, must have been among the worst of their troubles. . . .⁴²

Not long after its beginning as a university, students of Oxford rose to fame. Edmund Rich, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was not only the first Doctor of Divinity, but also the first recorded Master of Arts. His advice to his pupils was: "Study as if you were to live for ever: live as if you were to die to-morrow."⁴³

Then there was the famous Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln. Both of these men were mathematicians and friends of Roger Bacon. William of Drogheda lectured on civil law. Scanning the roll of the great men of that period is something like turning the pages of an English history of the thirteenth century.⁴⁴

Still, life did not go smoothly in the Oxford of that day, for there were brawls, riotous living, and many setbacks to the offices of the Church. Sad complaint was made of the dissolute conditions of the time. However, it was not long before a radical change in the life took place. The coming of the Dominicans to England in 1221, followed by the Franciscans in 1224, brought about something of a revolution in the ways of the people.

. . . Their work among the sick led the Friars to study medicine and physical conditions as few had done before, and gave a valuable stimulus to experimental science. Hardly less powerful in their appeal to popular feeling, to the humble and neglected dwellers in the towns, were the personal and sentimental elements in the Franciscan creed. . . . The warm human sympathies, the wide understanding which won for the Friars the hearts of the poor, made friends as readily among important people. . . .

The Mendicant Orders became famous for their learning, the Franciscans with their special attention

to language and to science at least as conspicuous as the rest. . . .⁴⁵

It is said that their libraries were full of treasures "heaped up, amid utmost poverty, the utmost riches of wisdom." Although the founder of the order had directed the friars to abandon learning, ironically they soon "became the intellectual masters of their age, the pioneers of the most original philosophy and the boldest speculation in the mediæval Church."⁴⁶

Here we bring to a close this brief sketch which so inadequately reveals the early struggles of those who tended the roots of the tree of learning. If, however, this outline serves no other purpose than to prompt students to spare time to look at the beginnings of our history, and to learn how our tongue was shaped and our literature lettered long years before Chaucer came to please us, it will have been worth the time spent in exploring many tomes in which the story is in danger of being buried and forgotten.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

⁴⁵ *Amer. Jour. Econ. Sociol.*, II, No. 3 (April, 1943), 305-23.

⁴⁶ *Suggestions for Academical Organisation with especial reference to Oxford*, 1850, p. 127; see also Thomas Huxley, *Lectures and Lay Sermons*, Everyman's Library (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., reprinted 1926), p. 69.

⁴⁷ London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd., 1932.

¹ *Panegyricus de St. Benoist*, in the complete works edited by Lachat (Paris, 1862-64).

² *The Dark Ages*, pp. 20-21.

³ James Bass Mullinger, "Universities," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (13th ed.; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1926), XXVII, 749.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-06.

⁷ *Circa* 480-575. He was a founder of educational methods and an historian; see Ket, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-19; and *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (13th ed.), V, 460.

⁸ Provost of Eton College, late Provost of King's College, Cambridge.

⁹ *Singularités historiques et littéraires*, p. 4; see also Neander, *History of the Church*, VI, 161.

¹⁰ See Henry Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1925), pp. 3-4.

¹¹ *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie*, IV, 353.

¹² See Christian Pfister, "Alcuin," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (13th ed.), I, 529.

¹³ XXXII, Pt. I (1885).

¹⁴ See Arthur Francis Leach, "Schools," *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (13th ed.), XXIV, 362.

¹⁵ Two vols.; 2nd ed.; Oxford University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, 1939.

¹⁶ Hodgkin, *op. cit.*, II, 437.

¹⁷ For more information on the pictures brought back by Benedict Biscop, see *supra*, pp. 126 and 143 n. 20.

¹⁸ "Learning and Literature Till Pope Sylvester II," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, III, chap. XX, 514-38.

¹⁹ "Gaul under the Merovingian Franks. Institutions," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, II, chap. V, 158.

²⁰ Everyman's Library, London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., reprinted 1930, pp. 284-85.

²¹ *A Short History . . .*, p. 41.

²² Dr. J. A. Giles, *Patres Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (Oxford, 1843-44). See also the Rt. Rev. G. F. Browne, *The Venerable Bede* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), chap. XII, pp. 217-31. Bishop Browne says there "are treatises on

Orthography, on the Art of Metre, on the Schemes and Tropes of Holy Scripture, on the Nature of Things, on Times, on the Counting of Times." This is an excellent study of Bede by the former Bishop of Stepney and of Bristol and a vice-president of the Society of Antiquaries.

²⁶ Two vols.; 6th ed.; Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841, II, 431.

²⁷ Hodgkin, *op. cit.*, II, 608-09.

²⁸ Werferth was a Bishop of the church of Worcester and "was well learned in the Holy Scriptures," according to Asser in his *Life of King Alfred*, trans. by L. C. Jane (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926), p. 57. "He it was who, by the command of the king, clearly and beautifully translated the books of the Dialogues of Pope Gregory with Peter, his disciple, for the first time, from the Latin tongue into the Saxon."

²⁹ Hodgkin, II, 620.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 680. This passage is found in Alfred's translation of the *Soliloquies* of St. Augustine. H. L. Hargrove (in *Yale Studies*, XXII, 1904) has translated the OE. *Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, p. 56, l. 13.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, I, Bk. V, chap. I-VI, 382-468.

³² *Loc. cit.*, n. 5 *supra*.

³³ The late Very Rev. Hastings Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, sometime Fellow of New College and Hertford College, Oxford, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* (3 vols.; Oxford, 1936), I, 76; and also "The Medieval Universities," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, VI, chap. XVII, 559-601.

³⁴ *Sur l'Age et l'origine des traductions latines*, p. 225.

³⁵ See Mullinger, *loc. cit.*, p. 750.

³⁶ A. J. Macdonald, *Lanfranc, A Study of His Life, Work and Writing* (Oxford University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, 1926), pp. 3-4. See also Sir Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: at the University Press, 1923), I, 77. Pollock and Maitland speak of Lanfranc as "the Conqueror's right-hand man. Those who tell us of the great theologian, of the great disciplinarian, never forget to add that he was a lawyer of world-wide fame, the most accomplished of pleaders."

³⁷ "Lombardy was the country in which the principle of personal law struck its deepest roots. . . . Then at Pavia in the first half of the eleventh century a law-school had arisen. In it men were endeavouring to systematize by gloss and comment the ancient Lombard statutes of Rothari and his successors." (Pollock and Maitland, *op. cit.*, I, 21-22).

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁹ In chap. VI, which was first written to commemorate the eight hun-

dredth anniversary of the death of Abélard, we described how the students flocked to his retreat when he sought to isolate himself from men and lead the life of a hermit.

⁴⁰ *A History of the University of Oxford* (3 vols.; New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924), I, 24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27; see also Dean Rashdall's *Universities*, I, 229-32.

⁴³ Mallet, *op. cit.*, I, 29-30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ Other Oxford scholars of the period, who were also churchmen, included: Ralph of Maidstone, Richard of Wych, Walter de Grey, and Thomas de Cantelupe.

⁴⁶ Mallet, *op. cit.*, I, 59-60, 61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*