

V.—NORTHUMBRIA IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY.

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After the death of Bede in 735 A.D., or rather after the close of his Ecclesiastical History four years earlier, the history of Northumbria seems to suddenly become almost a blank for more than a century. The mantle of the great historian fell on no successor. There are, indeed, certain local contemporary annals, such as the 'Continuation of Bede,' which carries on his 'recapitulation' or chronological summary¹ to the year 766,² and the similar record extending to 803, which together form the basis of the *Historia de Regibus Anglorum et Dacorum*, ascribed to Symeon of Durham, and which have been largely used by him in his *Historia Ecclesie Dunhelmensis*.³ There is also, of course, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. But annals such as these are after all but mere skeleton outlines. Except where obviously later legends have been interpolated,⁴ they give little more than mere 'Fasti,' chiefly relating to the succession of the kings and the bishops, and (in a few cases) the principal abbats, of Northumbria. The character sketches and touches of personal or local interest, which add so much to the charm of Bede's narrative, are wholly wanting. The dry bones are not living pictures.

¹ *H. E.*, v. 24.

² Printed in the editions of Bede at the end of the Ecclesiastical History. Moore's MS. in the Cambridge University Library (Kk. 5. 16) ends at the year 734. As it is probably contemporary with Bede [See Hardy, *Catalogue of MSS. relating to the Early History of Great Britain*, vol. i. pt. i. pp. 433-4], the notes so far were probably added by Bede himself. The subsequent entries down to 766, which are found in three MSS., may probably be ascribed to Cuthbert, the devoted disciple of Bede, who wrote the account of his master's last hours, and who was abbat of Jarrow in 765 (see below p. 261).

³ Hinde, Preface to Symeon of Durham, Surtees Soc. vol. 51, pp. xv.-xviii. See also p. xix.: 'The importance of the early annals embodied in the *Historia de Gestis Regum Anglorum et Dacorum* has been greatly underrated, in consequence of their having been looked upon as the production of an author of the twelfth century, instead of being, as they unquestionably are, the genuine records of the eighth and ninth; as ancient and authentic as any of the materials which have been incorporated in the Saxon Chronicle for the same period.'

⁴ e.g., concerning the relics of Acca and of Alchmund, under the years 740 and 781.

And yet, outside these records there is material, and contemporary material available by which it is possible to realise vividly some of the actors in the events so barely noticed in the annals, and to catch glimpses of the conditions of their life, and of their manners and interests and surroundings, during a transition period of great unrest and constant trouble. It is to this material that I propose briefly to draw attention, for it has been strangely overlooked hitherto by local historians. I refer to the foreign correspondence of Anglo-Saxon churchmen, engaged either in missionary or in literary work on the continent, with their friends and acquaintances at home.

The wandering, or rather travelling, instinct which is so marked a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, was as strongly active in the eighth century as in any preceding or later age. Men (and women) were as eager as a Benedict Biscop or a Wilfrid had been before them to visit the famous cities of the continent of Western Europe, and above all Rome itself; and their constant journeys to and fro afforded an opportunity of frequent communication between those who had settled in other lands and those who remained at home. Moreover, in addition to their service, special messengers were continually coming and going between the great leaders of missionary enterprise and the heads of the church at home. In this way a mass of correspondence of various kinds accumulated at all the chief centres; and in many cases at least these letters were carefully preserved as memorials of the great men by whom or to whom they had been written. Such collections must no doubt have existed in the leading religious houses of Northumbria, as, *e.g.*, Lindisfarne, Jarrow, York, Hexham, or Ripon, as is clear from the number of communications with them which are to be found in the Mainz records and in Alcuin's epistles. But in the incursions of the Danes, and possibly even more in the equally ruthless, if not worse, devastations of William of Normandy, they were utterly destroyed. We are now, therefore, thrown back on the fragments which have survived in the foreign collections.

There is, however, one unfortunate circumstance about these, that they were obviously cherished rather as choice literary productions, according to the taste of that age, than as historical evidence, so that almost universally the dates have been eliminated, and not infre-



quently even the names of the persons addressed.⁵ The absence of dates is often disappointing. Thus, there are two letters from Alcuin congratulating Ethelbald and Friduin respectively on their several elections to the abbacy of the twin monastery at Wearmouth and Jarrow,⁶ but there is nothing to indicate the order of their succession. But in not a few instances the dates can be readily enough supplied from the events alluded to; and in these allusions there is often no little interest of various kinds to be found. Sometimes it happens that a bare statement of the annals is rendered in this way instinct with all the life of personal details. To take but two instances of this:—

(i.) Under the year 764 the annals record that ‘heavy snow, frost-bound, lay on the land almost from the beginning of the winter to the middle of the spring.’⁷ How terribly this severe cold affected the work of the monasteries appears from a letter of Cuthbert, abbat of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the pupil of Bede to whom we owe the touching account of his master’s last hours, written to Lul, bishop of Mainz. Lul had written to him to ask for copies of some of Bede’s works. Cuthbert in return sends the prose and verse lives of St. Cuthbert, and adds that he would have sent more if possible, and that indeed he and his boys had done their best; but that the bitter winter, with its cold and frost and storms, had so numbed the hands of the copyists that they could not write out any more.⁸ One is reminded of the naïve remarks which occur at intervals in the Ecclesiastical

⁵ ‘Cum vero non propter rerum gestarum indagacionem historiaeque cognitionem describi solerent, sed ut exempla fierent literarum componendarum aut ob admonitionum gravitatem, quae in eis passim continentur, plerumque librarii et nomina et temporum signa earum neglexerunt omiseruntque,’ etc.—Dümmler, *Monumenta Alcuiniana* (edited after Jaffé’s death, from the materials prepared by him, by Wattenbach and Dümmler), p. 132.

⁶ Epp. 272 and 273 in *Monumenta Alcuiniana*. The subsequent quotations from Alcuin are taken from this edition.

⁷ ‘Anno dccciv. nix ingens gelu ligata omnibus retro saeculis incomparabilis, a principio hiemis pene usque ad medium veris terram oppressit.’—Sym. Dun. *Historia Regum*. In the different copies of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle this severe frost is ascribed to the years 761 or 762.

⁸ ‘Nunc vero, quia rogasti aliquid de opusculis beati patris, cum meis pueris iuxta vires, quod potui, tuae dilectioni praeparavi: libellos de viro Dei Cudbercto, metro et prosa compositos, tuae voluntati direxi. Et, si plus potuissem, libenter voluissem. Quia presentia [?] preteriti hiemis multum horribiliter insulam nostrae gentis, in frigore et gelu et ventorum et imbrium procellis, diu lateque depressit, ideoque scriptoris manus, ne in plurimorum librorum numerum perveniret, retardaretur.’—*Monumenta Moguntina*, ed. Jaffé, ep. 134, p. 301.

History of Ordericus Vitalis, about the pen dropping from his fingers through the winter cold, and the necessity of postponing his story till the return of spring.⁹ And yet in this same letter the good Cuthbert, in thanking Lul for the present he had sent him of an embroidered rug for his own use in the cold weather, says simply that he had with great joy devoted it for a covering for the altar in St. Paul's church as a thank-offering for his forty and six years in that monastery.¹⁰

(ii.) In 793 A.D. the Danes attacked and ravaged Lindisfarne, and scattered the monks whom they did not kill. But though the horrors of their attack are given with slightly more detail than usual in the annals,¹¹ nothing is said of the fate of the refugees. This disaster, however, afforded Alcuin, in his comfortable security at a distance, an opportunity of writing a whole batch of letters in the congenial role of a candid friend. Even amongst those which have been preserved there are two addressed to king Ethelred, two to bishop Higbald (besides a long and inopportune poem),¹² one to Cudrad, one to the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and one to Ethelhard, archbishop of Canterbury.¹³ His theme is chiefly an unsympathetic moralizing on the prevalent sins which he assumes were directly visited with the judgment of heaven in the attack on Lindisfarne. He is eager in fact to 'improve the occasion.' Incidentally, however, the condition of matters at Lindisfarne appears here and there. At first the bishop and the remnant of the monks are urged to vigour and courage in

⁹ *e.g.*, lib. iv. ad fin. 'Multa terrigenis imminent infortunia, quae si diligenter scriberentur omnia, ingentia replerent volumina. Nunc hiemali frigore rigens aliis occupationibus vacabo, praesentemque libellum hic terminare fatigatus decerno. Redeunte vero placidi veris sereno, ea quae minus plene disserui, sive quae restant in sequentibus replicabo: Deoque iuvante, casus guerrae pacisque nostratum veraci stilo copiose dilucidabo.'—*Hist. Norman. Scriptores Ant.* ed. Du Chesne, p. 546.

¹⁰ 'Similiterque mihimet ipsi coopertorium variatum, ad tegendum scilicet propter frigus meum corpus misisti. Quod videlicet omnipotenti Deo et beato Paulo apostolo ad induendum altare, quod in eius ecclesiae Deo consecratum est, cum magno gaudio dedi; quia et ego sub eius protectione in hoc monasterio quadraginta et sex annos vixi.'—*Mon. Mog.* p. 301.

¹¹ 'Veniunt . . . ad Lindisfarnensem ecclesiam; miserabili praedatione vastant cuncta, calcant sancta pollutis vestigiis, altaria suffodiunt, et omnia thesauraria sanctae ecclesiae rapiunt. Quosdam e fratribus interficiunt, nonnullos secum vinctos assumunt, per plurimos opprobriis vexatos nudos projiciunt, aliquos in mare demergunt.'—Sym. Dun., *H.R.*, 793.

¹² Du Chesne's ('Quercetani') ed., Paris, 1617, pp. 1711-1715.

¹³ Epp. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

defence of their sacred citadel, and are pointed to the example of Judas Maccabæus;¹⁴ and Alcuin promises to ask king Charles, 'when he has subdued his enemies through the mercy of God, and returns home,' if anything can be done in the matter of 'the boys who have been carried off into captivity by the pagans.'¹⁵ Cudrad the priest had evinced a special constancy of faith. Having escaped from the Danes, he seems to have resolved to devote himself to a stricter life according to rule, apparently as an anchorite; and he sent a message to Alcuin by one Buitta asking for his advice. Alcuin replies very cautiously (not to say obscurely); and while he commends his resolution he refers him to the counsel of the brotherhood, pointing out that he can observe his rule as well in the community life as in a hermit's call, and that he has an opening before him for influencing the other members of the fraternity in favour of a more regular life.¹⁶ It is clear then that the community, if scattered, was not broken up. There is no thought, even under the first pressure, of abandonment of the post. And in the later letters of this series it is apparent that the immediate danger has rapidly passed away, for Alcuin changes his tone, and loftily presses the bishop and the monks to place their reliance on spiritual weapons, and not on physical resistance.¹⁷

But besides supplying a mere sketching in of details into the already known outlines of leading events, the letters of Boniface and Lul, and more especially of Alcuin (himself a Northumbrian both by

¹⁴ 'Sed modo, qui residui estis, state viriliter, pugnate fortiter, defendite castra Dei. Mementote Judam Machabeum, quia templum Dei purgavit et populum a servitute liberavit extranea.'—Ep. 24, p. 191.

¹⁵ 'Cum dominus noster rex Karolus, hostibus per Dei misericordiam subditis, domum revertetur, nos Deo iuvante ad eum venire disponimus. Et si quid tunc vel de pueris, qui in captivitatem a paganis abducti sunt, vel de aliis quibusque necessitatibus vestris vestre sanctitati proficere possumus, diligenter ad effectum perducere curabimus.'—Ep. 24, pp. 192-3.

¹⁶ 'Valde sanctorum locorum ingemesco vastationem; sed vestrae fidei laetificor constantia. Deique omnipotentis conlaudaris clementiam, qui tibi inter manus paganorum pepercit. Ideo firma fide in quo coepisti proposito permanes; confidens in misericordia Dei, ut te suae pietatis conservet, ubicumque—fraterno consilio—te habitare velit Deus. Tamen—sive in loco habitacionis singularis sive in fraterna cohorte—solitariam conversationem et secretas orationes et ieiuniorum propositum diligenter observa Visitantesque te fratres consolatione sancti Spiritus diligenter ammone exhortans eos,' etc.—Ep. 26, p. 195.

¹⁷ *e.g.* 'Fortior est defensio sanctorumque intercessione [?], qui apud vos requiescunt, quam sagittarum collectio, et morum emendatio quam armorum congregatio. Memento Ezechiam regem quantos hostes una prece prosternerit.'—Ep. 25, p. 194.

birth and by training), afford invaluable information, which cannot be obtained elsewhere, as to the state of the religious houses and the general condition of life in the northern kingdom.

I.—THE MONASTERIES.

In the century which intervened between the foundation (or refoundation) of the Northumbrian church by Aidan and the death of Bede a remarkable development had taken place in the religious houses. At first they were essentially evangelistic centres, the prime object of which was to exert a missionary influence on their neighbourhood, and to train a succession of popular teachers. The instruction given in them was mainly—perhaps entirely—subordinated to this purpose. The heroes of the monastic life whose fame was greatest, and whose personal recruiting power was most attractive, were those who were especially prominent for their energy in spreading the gospel, or for the rigour of their own asceticism—a form of practical preaching which was very effective in a rough age of loose moral restraint. But with Benedict Biscop a new era began. His enthusiasm for art and culture and literature, and the varied stores collected in his travels, not only furnished his two monasteries at Wearmouth and Jarrow with richer accessories than their predecessors, but in effect set the standard of a new type of religious house. The chief monasteries tended now to become more and more self-centred. The pursuit of literature became an end in itself; the acknowledged leaders of thought and life were the great teachers and writers; art was developed and encouraged as a life work; personal culture took its place side by side with missionary activity as an integral aspect of the ideal Christian life. To this stage of course belongs the career of Bede himself; monuments of this period are still extant in such productions as the Codex Amiatinus¹⁸ and the Lindisfarne Gospels.¹⁹

After Bede's death the scholastic centre of Northumbria was transferred from Jarrow to York, where the mantle of the great teacher fell successively on his old pupil Egbert, and after him on

¹⁸ Now in the Laurentian library at Florence. For the interesting story of the identification of this Codex as one of Ceolfrid's three great Pandects of the new version (Bede, *Hist. Abb.*, § 12), see the *Church Quarterly Review* for Jan., 1888.

¹⁹ Raine, *Saint Cuthbert*, p. 34, n.

Aelbert, Egbert's successor in the archbishopric.²⁰ Alcuin, the pupil of both these masters, gives, in his poem *De Sanctis Eboracensis Ecclesiae*,²¹ some idea of the range of their learning. The subjects of Egbert's lectures included, besides the sacred scriptures and ecclesiastical themes such as the calculation of Easter, grammar, rhetoric, law, Latin versification, astronomy, and natural history. It was Aelbert who amassed the extensive library which Alcuin, to whose care it was afterwards entrusted, partially catalogues in his verses;²² and its range is certainly a remarkable one: for apart from the grandiloquent reference to 'all Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and African literature,'²³ which may mean anything or nothing, the authors definitely quoted by name are sufficient to prove its literary catholicity. Aristotle is the only Greek classic specifically referred to; but the Latin classics are represented by such names as Cicero, Virgil, Statius, Lucan, Pliny, etc., besides the later grammarians; while there is a regular catena of both Greek and Latin fathers. The reverence paid to the great scholastic teachers is, moreover, emphasised by the election of Egbert and Aelbert successively to the archiepiscopal chair.

But were Jarrow and York the only literary Northumbrian houses? It is a curious fact that to these alone are addressed requests from abroad for books. Boniface writes to Egbert twice over for copies of Bede's works, and sends him a transcript of Gregory's Epistles; he also asks Huetbercht, abbat of Jarrow, for some of Bede's writings.²⁴ Similarly, Lul writes to Aelbert (under one of his *aliases* as Koena²⁵), and to Cuthbert of Jarrow, with a like request.²⁶ And at the end of the century Alcuin applies to Charles for permission to send some of his scholars to York for a supply of books;²⁷ and in two of his letters

²⁰ *Vita Alcuini*, §§ 2, 4 (*Mon. Alc.* pp. 9, 13).

²¹ ll. 1430-1452. ²² ll. 1535-1561.

²³ 'Quidquid habet pro se Latio Romanus in orbe,
Graecia vel quidquid transmisit clara Latinis,
Hebraicus vel quod populus bibit imbre superno,
Africa lucifluo vel quidquid lumine sparsit.'—1536-9.

²⁴ *Mon. Mog.* Epp. 61, 100, 62; pp. 180, 250, 181. For Huetbercht see the references given in *Arch. Ael.*, vol. x. p. 202. It is doubtful, however, whether the inscribed fragment of a cross there referred to really represents his name. See *Arch. Ael.*, vol. xi. pp. 28-30.

²⁵ Called Aethelberht in *A.S. Chron.* s.a. 766 and 780. See Stubbs, *Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum*, p. 12.

²⁶ *Mon. Mog.* Epp. 122, 123; pp. 288, 289.

²⁷ Ep. 78, p. 346.

to the monks of Jarrow he refers to their library.²⁸ But in the other letters which passed to or from the northern houses there is no reference at all to the transmission of books.

Jarrow seems to have had, besides its literary activity, some fame for metal work as well. Boniface asks Huetbercht to send him a bell, if it be not too much trouble;²⁹ and at a later date Cuthbert mentions that he had sent to Lul by Hunvini, the priest, some six years before, twenty knives, and now forwards, amongst other presents with the books asked for, a bell 'such as he had at hand.'³⁰ In return he asks Lul to engage for him a glass worker who could make glass vessels; because he and his monks were ignorant of that art, and at a loss for it.³¹ It is clear, therefore, that the result of Benedict Biscop's importation of Gallic glass workers for Wearmouth had not been as effective or as permanent as might have been anticipated from Bede's account, written a generation earlier.³²

So far as Bede's records show, the Northumbrian religious houses seem to have been on the whole well administered, and to have maintained a fairly strict discipline during the first century of their existence. There was, however, one instance of laxity which foreshadowed the troubles of the following years: this was the case of Ebba's house at Coldingham, where amongst other irregularities the tendency to indulgence in extravagance of dress and in festal revelry had already made its appearance.³³ In the Anglo-Saxon monasteries

²⁸ Ep. 275, p. 846. 'Quid vero librorum copia prodest, si non erunt legentes in eis et intelligentes eos?' etc.—*Cf.* ep. 27, p. 199. 'Videte librorum thesaura.'

²⁹ 'Et si vobis laboriosum non sit, ut cloccam unam nobis transmittatis, grande solacium peregrinationis nostrae transmittitis.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 62, p. 181.

³⁰ 'Sed et ante sex annos per Hunvini meum presbyterum . . . aliqua parva exenia, cultellos videlicet 20 et gunnam de pellibus lutrarum factam, tuae fraternitati misi. . . . Duo vero pallia subtilissimi operis, unum albi alter tincti coloris, cum libellis, et cloccam, qualem ad manum habui, tuae paternitati mittere curavimus.'—*Ibid.* ep. 134, p. 301.

³¹ 'Si aliquis homo in tua sit parochia, qui vitrea vasa bene possit facere, cum tempus adrideat, mihi mittere digneris. Aut si fortasse ultra fines est in potestate cuiusdam alterius sine tua parochia, rogo, ut fraternitas tua illi suadeat, ut ad nos usque perveniat. Quia eiusdem artis ignari et inopes sumus.'—*Ibid.* p. 301.

³² 'Misit legatarios Galliam, qui vitri factores, artifices videlicet Britanni eatenus incognitos, ad cancellandas ecclesiae porticumque et caenaculorum eius fenestras adducerent. Factumque est, et venerunt: nec solum opus postulatum compleverunt, sed et Anglorum ex eo gentem huiusmodi artificium nosse ac discere fecerunt: artificium nimirum vel lampadis ecclesiae claustris vel vasorum multifariis usibus non ignobiliter aptum.'—*Hist. Abb.* § 5.

³³ Bede, *H. E.* iv. 25. See Montalembert, *The Monks of the West*, ed. Gasquet, vol. iii. p. 334, vol. iv. p. 426.

there was apparently no distinctive uniform garb, either for men³⁴ or for women. In his life of St. Cuthbert Bede mentions as a special memorial of his influence still existing among the monks at Lindisfarne that no one there wore any garment of varied or rich colour, but only clothing of natural wool;³⁵ while, earlier still, Aldhelm lashes in his turgid way the elaborate and fashionable attire affected by the religious in his time.³⁶ The habit of dressing gaily by the religious is assailed again and again in the eighth century. It is touched upon in the nineteenth canon of the council of Clovesho, in 747 A.D.,³⁷ and it is not improbably in connexion with this council that Boniface writes to Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, 'we have forbidden the servants of God to use gorgeous dress or cloak or arms,' and later on in the same letter he dwells with considerable emphasis on this point.³⁸ So, too, Alcuin continually harps on the subject: to Higbald, bishop of Lindisfarne, to the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow, to the monks of York, to Ethelbald and Friduin, abbats of Wearmouth and Jarrow,³⁹ and so on.

This irregularity, indeed, was not confined to the northern houses, but prevailed throughout the country. Moreover, it was a national,

³⁴ This may account in some measure for the great importance attached to the tonsure.

³⁵ 'Unde usque hodie in eodem monasterio exemplo eius observatur, ne quis varii aut preciosi coloris habeat indumentum, sed ea maxime vestium specie sint contenti, quam naturalis ovium lana ministrat.'—*Vita S. Cuth.* xvi.

³⁶ *De laud. virg.* lviii. (p. 364, ed. Wharton, 1693). The passage is perhaps worth quoting as a specimen of his style: 'Puderet ferre quorundam frontosam elationis impudentiam et comptam stoliditatis insolentiam, quae in utroque sexu non solum sanctimonialium sub regimine coenobii conversantium, verum etiam ecclesiasticorum sub ditone pontificai in clero degentium contra canonum decreta et regularis vitae normam deprehenduntur usurpatae, ob id solum, ut crustu interdicto, phalerataque venustate carnalis statura comatur, ac habitudo corporea membratim ac particulatim perornetur. Nam cultus gemini sexus huiusmodi constat, subucula bissina, sive hiacinthina, tunica coccinea capitium et manicae sericis clavate calliculae rubricatis pellibus ambiuntur, antiae frontis et temporum cicini calamistro crispantur, pulla capitis velamina candidis et coloratis mafortibus cedunt, quae vittarum nexibus adsutae talo tenus prolixius dependunt, unguis ritu falconum, accipitrum, seu certe ad instar cavannarum acuuntur,' etc.

³⁷ Spelman, *Concilia*, i. 250; Wilkins, i. 97.

³⁸ 'Interdiximus servis Dei, ut pompato habitu vel sago vel armis utantur . . . supervacuum et Deo odibilem vestimentorum superstitionem omni intentione prohibere stude. Quia illa ornamenta vestium,' etc.—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 70, pp. 202, 209.

³⁹ Ep. 24, p. 192; 25, p. 193; 27, pp. 198, 200; 35, p. 251; 272, p. 840; 273, pp. 841, 842; 274, p. 844; 275, p. 846. Cf. 85, p. 368.

not a peculiarly monastic, failing ; for after the attack on Lindisfarne by the Danes in 793 A.D. Alcuin writes to king Ethelred severely about it : ‘ What also of the extravagant use of garments beyond the requirements of human nature, beyond the custom of our predecessors ? This excess of princes is the impoverishment of the people. . . . Some labour under superabundance of clothing, while others perish with cold.’⁴⁰ And in a curious letter to Ethelhard, archbishop of Canterbury, he urges that if he visits king Charles he should see to it that his retinue, and especially the clergy in it, be soberly and becomingly habited, as though extravagance of dress were not customary on the continent.⁴¹

But luxury in dress was not the only failing in the religious houses ; excess in eating and drinking also had penetrated the cloister from the court and from the outside world generally. According to Symeon of Durham’s account, the members of Aidan’s house at Lindisfarne had been restricted to milk or water for beverage ; but when king Ceolwulf resigned his crown and turned monk, being unable to bear this restraint, he carried with him into the monastery the use of wine and beer, which thenceforward was generally permitted in that community.⁴² Be this as it may, the fact remains that high living and drinking were unfortunately a definite danger in the monasteries in the eighth century. The council of Clovesho dealt with it,⁴³ and Boniface, in his letter to archbishop Cuthbert, in speaking of it, adds pathetically, ‘ This evil is a peculiarity of the heathen and of our nation. It is not practised by Franks, Gauls, Lombards, Romans, or

⁴⁰ ‘ Quid quoque imoderatus vestimentorum usus ultra humane necessitatem nature, ultra antecessorum nostrorum consuetudinem ? Haec superfluitas principum paupertas est populi. . . . Alii inormitate vestium laborant; alii frigore pereunt.’—Ep. 22, p. 182.

⁴¹ ‘ Si vero ad domnum regem pervenias, ammonere socios tuos, maximeque clericos, ut honorifice se observent in omni religione sancta, in vestimentis et in ordine ecclesiastico. . . . Prohibe eos auro vel siricis uti vestimentis in conspectu domni regis ; sed humili habitu incedant secundum consuetudinem servorum Dei.’—Ep. 171, p. 617.

⁴² ‘ Hoc rege, iam monacho facto, efficiente, data est Lindisfarnensis ecclesiae monachis licentia bibendi vinum vel cerevisiam : ante illud tempus non nisi lac vel aquam bibere solebant, secundum antiquam traditionem Sancti Aidani, primi eiusdem ecclesiae antistitis et monachi, qui cum illo de Scotia venientes, ibidem, donante rege Oswaldo, mansionem acceperant.’—Sym. Dun. *Hist. Recapit.* p. 68, s.a. 854. The story is twice repeated verbatim by Roger de Hoveden, vol. i. (R.S.) pp. 8, 45.

⁴³ Can. 21, Spelman, i. 250 ; Wilkins, i. 97.

Greeks.'⁴⁴ Alcuin of course continually lashes the vice; but his virtuous indignation is somewhat discounted by his complaint to Joseph when he was detained in Northumbria in the year 790: 'Alas, alas, there is death in the pot, O thou man of God; for the wine is spent in our vessels, and the bitter ale rages in our bowels'; and he asks for one of the two casks (?) of the best clear wine promised him by the physician Winter to be forwarded to him 'if it be the best!'⁴⁵

National instincts indeed ran strongly in the cloister. The restlessness of foreign travel found its outlet for monks not only in missionary enterprise, but also in pilgrimages to Rome, and in visits to countrymen abroad, as has been already noticed. And not only men, but women also, were bent on these peregrinations. As early as 712 A.D. Oswy's daughter Aelfled, abbess of Whitby, wrote to Adolana, commending to her care a certain subordinate abbess who had long wished to make the pilgrimage to Rome, but who could not be spared earlier from her duties at home.⁴⁶ So also, *e.g.*, Eangyth and Heaburg (and Montalembert conjectures that they wrote from one of the houses on the northern coast—probably Hartlepool or Whitby⁴⁷) applied to Boniface for advice as to their wish to make the same journey.⁴⁸ To all such suggestions he replies very guardedly; and indeed he had good reason for his caution, as he explains to archbishop Cuthbert, in the sad fate of many who had recklessly rushed abroad without adequate protection.⁴⁹ Hunting, too, was a diversion occasionally indulged in by monks. The servants of God are forbidden to practise hunting, or wandering in the woods with dogs, or to keep hawks and falcons.⁵⁰ Alcuin, in the quaint manner of a

⁴⁴ 'Hoc enim malum speciale est paganorum et nostrae gentis. Hoc nec Franci nec Galli nec Longobardi nec Romani nec Graeci faciunt.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 70, p. 210.

⁴⁵ 'Vae, Vae, mors in olla, o homo Dei; quia vinum defecit in sitharchis nostris et celia acerba furit in ventriculis nostris. . . . Uinter medicus mihi promisit duo carrata de vino optimo et claro. Quem rogavi, ut tibi redderet. Et si habeas et si optimum sit, mittantur Rufu; ut ille mihi dirigat unum et aliud Brorda.'—Ep. 16, p. 171.

⁴⁶ *Mon. Mog.* ep. 8, p. 49.

⁴⁷ Vol. iv. p. 443.

⁴⁸ *Mon. Mog.* ep. 14, pp. 66-71. Their letter is quite pathetic, as they describe their lonely and harassed position, their yearning for sympathy, and their humble steadfastness in their loyalty to duty.

⁴⁹ *Mon. Mog.* ep. 70, p. 208.

⁵⁰ 'Servis Dei venationes et silvaticas vagationes cum canibus, et ut acceptores et walcones non habeant, prohibuimus.'—*Ibid.* p. 202

true pedant, urges the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow to pay closer attention to the training of the boys entrusted to their care ; to educate them for teachers, to keep them closely to the service of praise, and not to allow them to 'dig out the holes of foxes or to track the flying hare.'⁵¹ But after all, the picture presented of the inmates of the northern religious houses is only made the fuller of a kindly human interest by these allusions. Grave as were the occasional scandals in other parts of the land, no definite accusation of any serious moment is brought against any of the regular Northumbrian houses, except one charge only in the time of Osred, in which case they were the sufferers, not the aggressors. The enactment of preventive regulations, as in the Penitential of archbishop Egbert, does not by any means imply a widespread delinquency, any more than any secular criminal code involves a prevalence of all offences dealt with in it ; and even the censorious Alcuin himself acknowledges to the monks of Wearmouth that everything that he saw when with them, both in their domestic arrangements and in their manner of life, gave him the greatest satisfaction.⁵²

II.—THE COURT.

The court of the Northumbrian kingdom in the eighth century, except for the one interval of prosperity in the later years of Ceolwulf's reign, and under the strong hand of Eadbert, presents an ignoble and pitiable spectacle of violence, vice, and intrigue. The story of shame opens at the very commencement of the century, when, two months after the death of Aldfrid at the close of the year 705, his son Osred,⁵³ at the age of eight, became king ; and though, happily for his kingdom, he was slain by his kinsmen⁵⁴ when he was only nineteen, such had been the profligacy of his youth that he was afterwards referred to by Boniface as one of the first two abominable

⁵¹ 'Adsucescant pueri : laudibus adstare superni regis ; non vulpium fodere cavernas, non leporum fugaces sequi cursus. Quam impium est, Christi amittere obsequia et vulpium sequi vestigia. Discant pueri scripturas sacras ; ut aetate perfecta veniente, alios docere possint,' etc.—Ep. 27, p. 200.

⁵² 'Quia omnia, quae apud vos videbam, sive in habitationibus domorum sive in conversatione vitae regularis, valde mihi placuerunt.'—Ep. 274, p. 843.

⁵³ Eddius, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, 57, alone mentions the usurper Eadwulf, who held the throne for a few weeks after Aldfrid's death. He is not mentioned by Sym. Dun., or in the *A.S. Chron.*

⁵⁴ Will. Malmesb., *Gesta Regum*, i. 53.

reprobates, the other being his almost exact contemporary Ceolred, king of Mercia, who broke in upon the hitherto inviolate privileges of the religious houses, and basely seduced the consecrated nuns.⁵⁵ The monasteries had indeed fallen on evil days; for Boniface inveighs against the infringement of monastic liberties, unheard of in former times and now unknown in the whole Christian world, except amongst the English nation, by which monks were impressed to labour on the royal works and buildings.⁵⁶ And further, Bede, in his epistle to Egbert, written shortly before his death, refers with dismay to the spurious monasteries which had lately been set up in the northern kingdom by members of the court, not as religious establishments, but as refuges for a licentious seclusion, or opportunities for the counterfeit personal aggrandisement of titular 'abbats' who were no monks⁵⁷—a practice which had come into vogue in the evil days of Osred and his immediate successors, Coenred and Osric (both of whom met with violent deaths). After Osric a gleam of brighter times followed under Ceolwulf, the learned patron of literature, at whose request Bede wrote, and to whom he dedicated, his *Historia Ecclesiastica*

⁵⁵ 'Privilegia ecclesiarum in regno Anglorum intemerata et inviolata permanent usque ad tempora Ceolredi regis Mercionum et Osredi regis Derorum et Berniciorum. Hi duo reges haec duo peccata maxima in provinciis Anglorum . . . publice facienda monstraverunt. Et in istis peccatis commorantes, id est in stupratione et adulterio nonnarum et fractura monasteriorum, iusto iudicio Dei damnati, de culmine regali huius vitae abiecti et inmatura et terribili morte praeventi . . . sunt . . . Osredum spiritus luxoriae, fornicantem et per monasteria nonnarum sacratas virgines stuprantem et furentem, agitavit; usque quod ipse gloriosum regnum et iuvenilem vitam et ipsam luxoriosam animam contemptibili et despecta morte perdidit.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 59, pp. 174, 175. The same charge was afterwards brought against Ethelbald, king of Mercia.—*Ibid.* p. 170.

⁵⁴ 'De violenta quoque monachorum servitute operibus et aedificiis regalibus, quae in toto mundo christianorum non auditur facta nisi tantum in gente Anglorum . . . quod inauditum malum est praeteritis saeculis.'—*Ibid.* ep. 70, p. 210. See also the complaint of Eangyth and Heaburga about the 'servitium regis et reginae, episcopi et praefecti et potestatum et comitum.'—*Ibid.* ep. 14, p. 68.

⁵⁷ 'Sic per annos circiter triginta, hoc est, ex quo Aldfrid rex humanis rebus ablatas est, provincia nostra vesano illo errore dementata est, ut nullus pene exinde praefectorum extiterit qui non huiusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suae praefecturae comparaverit, suamque simal coniugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit: ac praevalet pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere sategerint . . . Et quidem tales repente, ut nosti, tonsuram pro suo libitu accipiunt, suo examine de laicis non monachi, sed abbates efficiuntur.'—§ 7. Compare Boniface: 'Illud autem, quod laicus homo, vel inperator vel rex aut aliquis praefectorum vel comitum, saeculari potestate fultus, sibi per violentiam rapiat monasterium de potestate episcopi vel abbatis vel abbatissae, et incipiat ipse vice abbatis regere et habere sub se monachos,' etc.—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 70, p. 208.

Gentis Anglorum. Even Symeon of Durham, however, the monk admirer of the monk king, is constrained to admit that the earlier years of his reign were marked by an overwhelming series of disasters—no doubt a heritage which he had received from his predecessors—but after a time a stable peace was secured by his efforts;⁵⁸ and this was maintained, and more than maintained, after Ceolwulf's retirement into the monastery of Lindisfarne in 737, under his nephew Eadbert, who ruled the kingdom with vigour and wisdom for twenty-one years. His fame spread far and wide, and he even made a friendly alliance with Pepin, king of the Franks. He also eventually resigned his throne and entered the monastic life, in spite of a strong protest from the kings of the English, who went so far as to offer to surrender part of their own territory to be added to his kingdom if he would but consent to remain in office. He was a brother of archbishop Egbert, by whose side he was buried at York.⁵⁹ After Eadbert's cession of the throne the glory of the kingdom departed, and matters went steadily from bad to worse; in less than forty years there were eight kinglets, six of whom were driven out by their subjects, two (one of them a former exiled monarch returned) met with violent deaths. Not one lived out his reign to the term of a natural death. Eadbert's son and successor, Osulf, was murdered by his own household within a year of his accession.⁶⁰ Ethelwald, surnamed Moll, the next king, won some notoriety by his victory over Oswin near Melrose in 762, and in the same year he married Etheldryth at Catterick on November 1st. But three years later he 'lost' his throne, apparently by a popular vote of the national assembly, at Winchanheale⁶¹ (which Roger of Wendover identifies with Finchale), and passed the few remaining years of his life in exile. After his death his widow entered a nunnery, as appears from Alcuin's two letters addressed to her.⁶² Alchred apparently

⁵⁸ 'Cuius Ceolwulfi regni principia et processus multis redundavere rerum adversantium motibus, sed post ariditate pace ac serenitate temporum,' etc.—*Hist. Eccl. Dun.* i. 13.

⁵⁹ 'Cuius excellentiae fama ac operum virtutis longe lateque diffusa etiam ad regem Francorum Pipinum pervenit, propter quod ei amicitia iunctus multa ei ac diversa dona regalia transmisit . . . rogatus multum antea ne id faceret a regibus Anglorum, et partem regni sui eius regno adicere volentibus, dummodo retinens honorem suo in regno resideret. At ille omnibus divitiis et regnis servitutum Dei praetulit . . . sepultus est Eboraci in eadem porticu qua et frater Ecgbertus.'—*Ibid.* ii. 3.

⁶⁰ Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 758.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 759, 762, 765; *A.S. Chron.* 761.

⁶² Epp. 50, 62, pp. 274, 297.

made some attempt to strengthen his position by seeking the alliance or support of the young king Charles when he became king of the Franks on the death of his father, Pepin; for he wrote to bishop Lul to ask for his good offices on behalf of his embassy.⁶³ No doubt he was actuated by the example of Eadbert's alliance with Pepin. What was the immediate result of this proposition is not recorded, but even if successful it proved of no avail; for in 774 he was in his turn driven into exile 'by the counsel and consent of all his subjects, and deserted by the royal family and the chiefs of the nation.'⁶⁴

Ethelred, son of Moll, was also extruded within six years, by Aelfwold, who alone is characterised by Symeon of Durham as 'a pious and just king.' Symeon adds, 'as the next article will prove;'⁶⁵ but he relates nothing under the next year about him, except the burning of his extortionate justiciary,⁶⁶ Bearn at Seletun by two of the high-reeves⁶⁷ of Northumbria, Osbald and Ethelhard, which can scarcely be his proof. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, however, which Symeon had before him, mentions that the pall which Eanbald received from Rome in 780, the bare fact of which is narrated by Symeon, was obtained by Aelfwold, who apparently sent Alcuin to ask for it.⁶⁸ Aelfwold reigned for ten years, which is in itself an evidence of his acceptability to his subjects in such turbulent times. At length he was murdered by his patrician Sicgan at Scythlescester, near the Wall; and his memory was cherished by the building of the church of St. Cuthbert and St. Oswald on the spot.⁶⁹ Osred, Alchred's son, obtained the throne, but within a year was seized by his chieftains, 'shorn'⁷⁰ at York, and deprived of

⁶³ 'Nostris quoque, dilectissime frater, legationibus ad dominum vestrum gloriosissimum regem Carl obsecramus consulendo subvencias, ut pax et amicitia, quae omnibus conveniunt, facias stabiliter inter nos confirmari.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 119, p. 285.

⁶⁴ Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 774. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 779.

⁶⁶ 'Patricium.'—Sym. Dun. 'Huntingdon and Wendover call Bearn the king's justiciary.'—H. Hinde.

⁶⁷ 'Duces.'—Sym. Dun. 'High-reeves.'—*A.S. Chron.*

⁶⁸ 'King Alfwold sent to Rome for a pall, and invested Eanbald as archbishop.'—*A.S. Chron.* But the *Vita Alchuwini* says, § 6: 'Iussus igitur (Alcuinus) ab Eanbaldo archiepiscopo . . . ut sibi pallium impetraret ab apostolico, venit Romam.'

⁶⁹ Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 788.

⁷⁰ 'Osredus autem rex dolo suorum principum circumventus et captus ac regno privatus, attonsus est in Eboraca civitate, et postea necessitate coactus exilium petit.'—*Ibid.* 790. Cf. App. to Bede, *H.E.* v. 24. 'Anno 731 Ceoluulf rex captus et adtonsus et remissus in regnum' (quoted by Sym. Dun. 732).

his power, whereupon he fled to the Isle of Man.⁷¹ Two years later, trusting to the pledged support of certain chieftains, he returned secretly, but deserted by his forces he was taken and put to death⁷² by his successor Ethelred, son of Moll, who had been recalled from exile. It was shortly after Ethelred's return that Alcuin arrived in York.⁷³ According to the *Vita Alcuini* this journey was undertaken to obtain leave from his king and his bishop to accept Charles's invitation to settle permanently at his court.⁷⁴ He did not at first find the king as well disposed towards him as he had hoped and could have wished ; but he assures abbat Adalhard that he had testified to him and others, and was striving his utmost to put down injustice !⁷⁵ Three years later, however, when he had attained his purpose, and returned to France, he writes two pompous letters to his 'dearest lord, king Ethelred,' and to his 'most excellent son, king Ethelred,' on the occasion of the Danish

With reference to this, Montalembert writes :—'After two obscure reigns, Ceolwulf attempted in vain to struggle against the disorder and decadence of his country. He was vanquished, and made captive by enemies whose names are not recorded, and had to submit, as happened to more than one Merovingian prince, to receive the tonsure by compulsion, and was shut up in a convent. He escaped, however, regained the crown, and reigned for some time. . . . But after a reign of eight years, a regret, or an unconquerable desire, for that monastic life which had been formerly forced upon him against his will, seized him.'—Vol. iv. p. 275. On the other hand, Stevenson, in his translation of Symeon of Durham (*Church Historians of England*, vol. iii. pt. ii.), in these two cases translates *attonsus* by 'received the tonsure' and 'assumed the tonsure.' But the word seems to imply less than the one and more than the other assigns to it ; for it does not necessarily involve entrance into the monastic life, nor does it denote a willing acquiescence. *Cf. Conc. Mogunt.*, an. 813, c. 23 : 'De clericis vero hoc statuimus, ut hi qui inventi sunt sive in canonico sive in monachico ordine tonsurati sine eorum voluntate, si liberi sunt, ut ita permaneant.' Ducange, vol. v., 1174.

⁷¹ In Eufoniam insulam, quae Man vocatur.—Sym. Dun. *Hist. Eccl. Dun.* ii. 4. ⁷² Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 792.

⁷³ 'Nuper Aethelredus filius Aethelwaldi de carcere processit in solium et de miseria in magistratum. Cuius regni novitate detenti sumus.'—Ep. 16, p. 170.

⁷⁴ 'Cui Albinus : *Domine mi rex . . . tuum est tantum, hoc a meo rege et episcopo impetrare. Tandem igitur ratione victus, consensit ut iret.*'—§ 6. From a letter of Alcuin to Colcu it might seem that one object of his visit was to endeavour to restore peace between Charles and Offa, king of Mercia (*cf.* 'sunt qui dicunt, nos pro pace esse in illas partes mittendos.'—Ep. 14, p. 167) ; but it does not appear that he was actually engaged on this mission. There seems to be no evidence for the reason assigned in the *Dict. Chr. Biog.* (vol. i. p. 73 b) that 'in 790 Alcuin returned to Northumbria, possibly with a view to the security of his property.'

⁷⁵ 'Caeterum cognosca turbatas ex parte res me offendisse in patria nec invenisse animum novi regis qualem vel speravi vel volui. Tamen aliquid fecimus ammonitionis illi et aliis. Et hodie laboramus contra iniustitiam prout possumus, cum quibusdam potentibus.'—Ep. 16, p. 172.

attack on Lindisfarne; and in yet another letter, marked 'private,' he subsequently addresses to him some homely counsels concerning his personal conduct.⁷⁶

In April, 796, Ethelred was murdered at Corbridge.⁷⁷ The news of his death, says Alcuin, writing to Offa, king of Mercia, was brought to Charles by some messengers of his who were returning from Scotland, just as he was on the point of sending a consignment of gifts to Ethelred and to the Northumbrian bishops. Enraged at the treachery of the people, whom he indignantly described as perfidious and perverse, the murderer of its lords, and worse than the heathen, he designed to retaliate upon them, had not Alcuin (as he boasts) interceded for them.⁷⁸

Osbold, the patrician, who had burnt Bearn, was placed on the throne by some of the chieftains, but he was not recognised by the court generally, and after only twenty-seven days fled to Lindisfarne, and on to the king of the Picts. Eardulf was recalled from exile and solemnly crowned at York.⁷⁹ His reign, after a stern repression of a revolt at Whalley in 798, continued until 806,⁸⁰ and so outlasted the close of the eighth century. The later succession of Northumbrian kings is preserved in the *Libellus de primo Saxonum adventu*, printed in the Surtees Society's edition of Symeon of Durham; so that William of Malmesbury's statement that 'after Ethelred no one durst ascend the throne,' is obviously incorrect. He adds, somewhat inconsistently, 'each dreading the fate of his predecessor, and preferring a life of safety in inglorious ease to a tottering reign in anxious suspense; for most of the Northumbrian kings had made their exit by a violent death, which was now become almost habitual. Thus being without a sovereign for thirty-three years, that province

⁷⁶ Epp. 22, 23, 42 ('tibi soli litteras scribere curavi').

⁷⁷ *De primo Saxonum adventu*, ap. Sym. Dun. (Surtees Soc.), p. 211. In the *Hist. Regum*, 'Cobre.'

⁷⁸ 'Similiter et Aethilredo regi et ad suas episcopales sedes dona direxit. Sed, heu pro dolor, donis datis et epistolis in manus missorum, supervenit tristis legatio per missos, qui de Scotia per vos reversi sunt, de infidelitate gentis et nece eius. Qui, retracta donorum largitate, in tantum iratus est contra gentem—ut ait: "illam perfidam et perversam et homicidam dominorum suorum," peiorem eam paganis estimans—ut omnino, nisi ego intercessor essem pro ea, quicquid eis boni abstrahere potuisset et mali machinare, iam fecisset.'—Ep. 58, p. 290.

⁷⁹ Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 796. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 798; *A.S. Chron.* 798, 806.

became an object of plunder and contempt to its neighbours.⁸¹ But the general picture of the condition of things is not inapt.

Alcuin of course seized upon the tragedies of 796 as an opportunity of letter writing. He sends his condolences to Etheldryth, Ethelred's mother; he urges Ethelburga to press Ethelfled, the widow of Ethelred, to enter the monastic life; he advises the same course for Osbald, whom he dissuades from attacking his country, beseeching him to keep his letter and have it constantly read to him.⁸² Whether at his instigation or not, Osbald did turn monk, soon became abbat, and died and was buried at York in 799.⁸³ Alcuin also sends his congratulations and counsels to Eardulf; but at a later date he tells Osbert of Mercia that he has been disturbed by a report that Eardulf had repudiated his lawful wife and was living with another woman in open sin.⁸⁴ This correspondence gives a curious insight into the close attention with which events at home were followed by Northumbrians abroad.

III.—POPULAR MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

Of the general manners and customs of the people at large there is disappointingly little to be learned from the epistolary correspondence of the eighth century, or indeed from any other source. And yet this is no matter for wonder; for outside the chief foci of life and activity—the monasteries and their sedate occupations or sober commerce, and the court with its reckless profligacy, its military expeditions, and its autocratic rapacity—there can have been but little popular life. All men who were not actually slaves or serfs were attached either to the community of a religious house or to the retinue of some potentate; there was probably little or none of individual freedom of homely folk. It is remarkable how little of the real life of the people actually transpires even in the pages of Bede. Moreover, the writers of the period of whatever kind were all monastic. A stray king here and there, like Alchred of Northumbria or Cynewulf of Wessex,⁸⁵ might indite an occasional letter, but it was probably through the help of some kindly monk that it was penned.

⁸¹ *Gesta Regum*, i. § 73 (Stevenson's translation).

⁸² Epp. 62, 63 (?), 59, 66. ⁸³ Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 799.

⁸⁴ Epp. 65, 79 (p. 350). ⁸⁵ *Mon. Mog.* epp. 119, 138.

Alcuin urges Osbald and Eardulf to have his letters constantly read to them, not to read them.

There is, however, one fragment which affords some interesting information. Amongst the Alcuinian letters is preserved one from George, bishop of Ostia, to pope Hadrian I., giving an account of his embassy to England in 786.⁸⁶ Two synods were held in his presence, one in Northumbria and one in Mercia. The details of the latter are passed over in silence, but the canons passed at the former are enumerated, and the nineteenth, dealing with pagan rites still observed, is fully given.⁸⁷ These are: (i.) tattooing; (ii.) wearing clothes in heathen fashion (though in what this consisted does not appear); (iii.) the mutilation of horses by slitting their nostrils,⁸⁸ fastening their ears together and making them deaf, and docking their tails; (iv.) casting lots to decide disputes; and (v.) eating horseflesh. The last of these customs was an anxiety to Boniface throughout his long missionary career. About the year 732 pope Gregory III. wrote to him, 'Meanwhile you have added that some eat the wild horse, while

⁸⁶ Ep. 10, pp.155-162. See Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 786; *A.S. Chron.* 785.

⁸⁷ See below, Appendix, p. 279.

⁸⁸ The practice of slitting the nostrils of horses and asses is still in vogue in widely-separated districts of Asia, Africa, and even Europe. It seems to be based upon the idea that it improves the wind of the animal. Dr. Arthur Neve, of Srinagar, told me that some years ago he was travelling in Mesopotamia. He was riding a camel, but his guide was mounted on an ass. Owing to the want of water the ass twice fell from exhaustion. On the second occasion, the guide took out his knife and slit its nostrils. Dr. George Fleming, in *The Wanton Mutilation of Animals* (1898), p. 7, suggests, as a further reason, 'that it prevents neighing—a disqualification of much importance during war.' He refers to the prevalence of the custom 'in Persia, Mongolia, and even Northern Africa; and ponies with slit nostrils are often seen in the Himalayas and in Afghanistan. It was practised in Hungary not long ago.' Dr. J. Drummond, of South Shields, has kindly pointed out this reference. He also wrote to *The Field* in September, 1898, asking for instances of this practice. Two interesting letters appeared in answer: (i.) From 'Indicus olim' on September 24: 'I have in Upper India seen many asses with their nostrils slit. The animals so treated generally belonged to washermen, village potters, etc., and were as a rule made to carry (for their size and strength) heavy back loads. I remember asking a native why this was done. He said that asses when labouring under heavy loads have their nostrils greatly dilated, and that therefore slitting them was supposed to give them relief by enlarging the orifices.' (ii.) From 'A.B.H.' on October 1: 'This I have often seen done with the ponies in China, which are sent down from the north to be sold to Europeans for racing; the idea being (I fancy) to assist the breathing of the pony if he shows any weakness in that part.' Canon Maclean, in his *Account of the Eastern Syrian Christians*, p. 9, says: 'The great feature of all Persian plains is the donkey, carrying the produce of the land from the villages to the towns, or from village to village. They all have their nostrils slit; this is supposed to give them a better wind.'

most of the people eat the tame horse. This you must on no account allow henceforward, brother, but in whatever way you can, with the help of Christ, put a stop to it by all means; and lay on them an appropriate penance. For it is a filthy and detestable custom.'⁸⁹ Twenty years later pope Zachary included wild horses in the list of animals to be avoided for food; and a curious list it is: three birds, the jackdaw, the crow, and the stork, and three beasts, the beaver, the hare, and the wild horse, are specified. 'But,' he adds, 'you are well skilled, most holy brother, in all the sacred Scriptures.' He therefore grounds his prohibition on the Levitical law, and its restrictions as to clean and unclean animals.⁹⁰ But the papal ambassadors at the Northumbrian synod did not assign this reason, nor even the real objection of the association of the custom with the worship of Odin, but merely put it quite baldly, 'Moreover, most of you eat horses, which no Christian in the East does; the which also do ye avoid.' It is a wonder if any self-respecting Northumbrian accepted such a prohibition!

The decrees of this synod (which seems to have been held at Corbridge)⁹¹ were signed in order by Aelfwold the king, Tilberht bishop of Hexham (as bishop of the diocese), Eanbald archbishop of York, Higbald bishop of Lindisfarne, Ethelbert bishop of Whithorn, Aldulf bishop of Mayo, the commissaries of bishop Ethelwine, Siegar the justiciary (who afterwards murdered Aelfwold), Alfrich and

⁸⁹ 'Inter ea agrestem caballum aliquantos adiunxisti comedere, plerosque et domesticum. Hoc nequaquam fieri deinceps sanctissime sinas frater, sed, quibus potueris Christo iuvante modis, per omnia conpescce; et dignam eis interdicito paenitentiam. Inmundum enim est atque execrabile.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 28, p. 93.

⁹⁰ 'In primis de volatilibus, id est de graculis et corniculis atque ciconiis. Quae omnino cavendae sunt ab esu christianorum. Etiam et fibri atque lepores et equi silvatici multo amplius vitandi. Attamen, sanctissime frater, de omnibus scripturis sacris bene compertus es.'—*Mon. Mog.* ep. 80, p. 222. The names, however, are not taken from the lists in Lev. xi. and Deut. xiv.

⁹¹ So Jaffé conjectures from the presence of Aldulf, who was consecrated by Eanbald, Tilberht, and Higbald at Corbridge in 786, and was sent off with due honour to his western see, enriched with many gifts.—(Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 786.) See his note, *Mon. Alc.* p. 160. The *Dict. Chr. Biog.* vol. ii. p. 644 b, describes the synod as 'probably that of Pincanhale.' The latter, however (which should be written Wincanhale or Winchala—see Hinde's note, Sym. Dun. *H.R.* p. 22), was held in the following year (Sym. Dun. *H.R.* 787), probably in accordance with the third canon of the synod of Corbridge, *de duobus conciliis quotannis agendis*. The same article is also in error in stating that 'the acts of the southern synod are to be found in the letter of George'; it is those of the northern council which are given.

Sigwulf the 'duces' (or high-reeves), Albert abbat of Ripon, and Erhart, an abbat. It is interesting to find Aldulf present, who had just been consecrated at the monastery of Corbridge by Eanbald, Tilberht, and Higbald for Mayo, as it shows the strong link which still existed between the Northumbrian church and its offshoot at Mayo, founded more than a hundred years before by bishop Colman, after his discomfiture at the council of Whitby, and his subsequent troubles at Inisboufinde.⁹²

Thus some scattered features of the life of Northumbria in the eighth century stand out from the past, showing a slow and interrupted but sure progress of disintegration which left the kingdom an easy prey for the Danes: a corrupt court, torn asunder by intrigues; a distressed church, with no great champions to maintain her liberties; a people, which in many points had hardly emerged from the rough barbarism of heathendom. And yet, through all the mists there shine again and again the bright examples of simple earnest men and pure self-denying women, who, by their steadfast faith and honest fulfilment of duty, did honour to their generation, and left a noble heritage to those that came after. The Northumbrian Anglo-Saxons were a strong race; their misfortune was the want of strong leaders, both in the church and (more especially) in the state.

APPENDIX.

THE NINETEENTH CANON OF THE SYNOD OF 786 A.D.

Anneximus: ut unus quisque fidelis christianus a catholicis viris exemplum accipiat; et si quid ex ritu paganorum remansit, avellatur contemnatur abiciatur.

Deus enim formavit hominem pulchrum in decore et specie; pagani vero diabolico instinctu cicatrices teterrimas superinduxerunt, dicente Prudentio:

tinxit et innocuum maculis sordentibus humum.

Domino enim videtur facere iniuriam, qui creaturam suam foedat et deturpat. Certe si pro Deo aliquis hanc tincturae iniuriam sustineret,

⁹² Bede, *H.E.* iv. 4.

magnam inde remunerationem acciperet. Sed quisquis ex superstitione gentilium id agit, non ei proficit ad salutem: sicut nec Judaeis circumcisio corporis sine credulitate cordis.

Vestimenta etiam vestra more gentilium, quos Deo opitulante patres vestri de orbe armis expulerunt, induitis. Miranda res et nimis stupenda, ut, quorum vitam semper odistis, exempla imitemini.

Equos etiam vestros turpi consuetudine detruncatis: nares finditis, aures copulatis verum etiam et surdas redditis, caudas amputatis; et quia illos illaesos habere potestis, hoc nolentes, cunctis odibiles redditis.

Audivimus etiam, quod, dum inter vos litigium versatur sortes more gentilium mittitis. Quod omnino sacrilegum istis temporibus reputatur.

Equos etiam plerique in vobis comedunt, quod nullus christianorum in orientalibus facit. Quod etiam evitate. Contendite, ut omnia vestra honeste et secundum Dominum fiant.

