

A.W.T. PAPERS

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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

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To Emma K. Frangee

More than a thousand years ago, there was born on the east coast of England beneath the shadow of a great abbey, to the mouth of the Wear, a gentle God, whose name has come down to us through the lapse of many centuries, as the first English scholar and historian. Of his early youth, but little is recorded, but while still young, we find him at the head of a school in Jarrow, where he was born. — In the light of the present we find it difficult to contemplate the England of that day, an insignificant island, torn with dissensions and tumults within, inhabited in many parts, by a half barbarous people and considered the legal spoil of the surrounding nations. Such was England at the time of the birth of the Northumbrian scholar, the "venerable Bede" as he has been

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styled of later times, this was England,
the fountain head of that great people
on whom, now, "the sun never sets."

The early history of the nation to
which we belong, cannot fail to be
of interest to us, and we linger with
loving pride over this first scholar
and Chronicler, of our English tongue.

Beda's "Ecclesiastical History of
the English Nation," written in the
eighth century, has endeared ^{the}
author to all the English speaking race. —
who first came in the year 449, from
the heart of a peninsula which parts
the Baltic from the Northern seas, a
barbarian horde, whose God was Woden,
headed by Hengist and his war bands
and landed on the shores, of the Isle
of Thanet, on the East Coast of Eng-
land, below the mouth of the river
Stamens. England was then Britain,
but these barbarian Englishmen

gradually insinuated themselves over the island, until they became its masters and established their own worship, which was in turn overthrown by emissaries from Rome, and the barbarians became civilized Christians. All we know of English history, in the early period of its existence, is from this scholarly monk. During his long life he never left his water bound home, or his beloved monastery, but gathered about him his fellow monks and strangers, who had heard of his wondrous knowledge. All came to learn of this wise and gentle recluse, who seemed to gather only that he might scatter the precious fruit of his researches. As the fruit of his industrious life he gave to his descendants forty volumes, embracing many subjects. When we consider what the making

of books was in those far away days, we will wonder that this marvellous industry ever could have accomplished so much. There is no evidence that he received much aid from others, as he writes, "I am my own secretary, I make my own notes. I am my own librarian."

The last labor of his life, was a translation into the English tongue of the Gospel of St. John. The weight of years was on him, and he saw just beyond, the rest, which awaited the "good and faithful servant," yet he could not go, for a few chapters of his allotted task, was yet unfinished and so the worn and wearied master toiled on among his weeping pupils that under his eye failing and glimmering, as it was, he might see the end of his labor. — "It is finished at last" said the scribe, who had penned the

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flattering words as they fell from his
lips. "You speak truly," he said, "all
is finished now, - and quietly
passed away."