

**THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
AND THE EDUCATION OF THE  
PEOPLE: FROM THE EARLIEST  
TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY**

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The Church of England and the Education of the People: From the Earliest times to the present day by Charles A. Wells

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**CHARLES A. WELLS**

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TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY**



*From Professor A. B. Hunsdale*  
THE *Oct. 1892*

# CHURCH OF ENGLAND

AND THE

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## EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

FROM THE

EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY.

A PAPER COMPILED FROM

VARIOUS SOURCES AND OFFICIAL REPORTS.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES A. WELLS, B.A.

ORGANIZING SECRETARY, CHURCH DEFENCE INSTITUTION.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Introductory slide.\*

The object of this pamphlet, which may be used as a lecture with illustrative views, is (1) to trace the growth of education in this country from the earliest times, and to show the part the Church has taken therein; and (2) to point out how, amid difficult circumstances, the Church of England is witnessing in the Nineteenth Century to her care for the highest welfare of the people. The hope entertained by the author is that his compilation, culled from various historical authorities and official statistics, may vindicate our National Church from aspersions frequently cast upon her character both in the past and in the present. For some twelve centuries, at least, the Church of England has been labouring in this work as the circumstances of the day permitted. It may not be said that she has done all that could, or ought to, have been done, but without question all the work done has been hers, until, at least, quite modern times; and the debt due to the Church of England by the people of England is consequently one which can never be repaid. Moreover, the education provided has been perfect in kind and intention; it aimed, that is, at furnishing the whole man—body, intellect, and spirit—and sought to make of him not only a good citizen of earth, but also of heaven.

\* The side-headings in this type give the title of pictures which illustrate the particular section opposite to which they stand.

### LIST OF AUTHORITIES CONSULTED.

(See Marginal References.)

- Publications of S.P.C.K. and National Society.  
"How we Got the Bible" ... .. (Bagster).  
Hunt's "English Church in the Middle Ages" ... (Longmans).  
Johnson's "Normans in Europe" ... .. "  
Gibson's "Northumbrian Saints" ... .. (S.P.C.K.).  
Bohn's "Bede's Ecclesiastical History" ... .. (Bell and Sons).  
Erskine Clarke's Parish Magazine ... .. (Wells Gardner).  
The English Language ... .. (Nelson and Son).  
Craik's "State and Education" ... .. (Macmillan).  
Blunt's Household Theology ... .. "  
Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor (1809).  
Reports of Education Department.



## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

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### PART I.

It is now 1200 years since, according to Bede, on a winter's night there lay asleep in the stable of the famous Abbey of Whitby a certain poor Anglo-Saxon cowherd. Sad and dispirited he had left the feast, where his comrades were amusing themselves with the simple rhymes of those early days. Cœdmon could not sing; and when he saw the harp being passed towards him, he arose from the board and went out to the stable. His soul was sad within him; and as he lay in the cow-shed, suddenly there shone around him a heavenly glory, and in the midst of the glory there appeared One who had been cradled in a stable 600 years before.

"Sing Cœdmon," said He, "sing some song for Me." "I cannot sing," was the sorrowful reply. "Yet," said He, "thou shalt sing for Me." "What shall I sing?" "Sing the beginning of created things." And as he listened a divine power came over him, and words he had never heard before arose in his mind. (*Bede*, iv., 24.)

Bede recounts the above story, and tells us that Cœdmon received from God in a vision the power of sacred song. The first English book known to have been written in England is Cœdmon's "Poem." (*Engl. Lang.*, p. 29.)

In the year 628 there was born of noble English family Benedict Biscop, a man who never had an enemy in the world. About forty years after we find him returning from abroad with Archbishop Theodore, and taking over for a time the govern-

*St. Augustine's,  
Canterbury.*

ment of the Monastery of SS. Peter and Paul, which St. Augustine had founded seventy years before. Benedict found a sad dearth of literature at Canterbury, and paid no less than five visits to the continent, returning each time with no inconsiderable number of books on various branches of sacred literature. At length this great book-hunter went northward to Jarrow and Wearmouth, and there deposited his treasures. After Benedict had gone, Hadrian became Abbot of the monastery at Canterbury, and he, with the support and assistance of Archbishop Theodore, who was well instructed both in sacred and secular literature, gathered round him a crowd of disciples, to whom, together with the books of Holy Writ, he also taught the arts of ecclesiastical poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic. Among the most famous pupils were Albinus, who furnished Bede with the history of the county of Kent, and Aldhelm, who became Bishop of Sherborne and translated the Scriptures, etc., and may fairly be called the "Bede" of Wessex. (*Gibson*, p. 93; *Bede*, iv., 2.)

The Ven.  
Bede's  
Tomb.

It was to the care of Benedict Biscop that Bede was handed over when he was but seven years old. After leaving Wearmouth Bede made his home at Jarrow; there he laboured and there he died. "Spending all my life," is his account of himself, "in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of the SS., and amidst the observance of regular discipline and the daily care of singing in the church, I always delighted in learning, teaching and writing. From the time I was ordained priest up to my fifty-ninth year (when the "Ecclesiastical History" was finished) I made it my business for the use of me and mine to compile commentaries upon the sacred Scriptures. I am my own secretary. I make my own notes. I am my own librarian." After two months' suffering the Ven. Bede died at Ascensontide, A.D. 735, at the age of sixty-three. "He daily instructed us," writes one of his scholars, "and used to say,—I do not want my boys to read a lie and to work to no purpose after I am gone. Learn as quickly as you can; for I know not how long I may be with you."

It is a matter of lasting regret that we have no full account of the labours of Archbishop Egbert, of York, A.D. 732-766. But

we do know something of the activity of his fertile pen, and of the discipline he restored throughout his great diocese. The work, however, on which his claim to lasting gratitude rests, is the foundation of the famous school at York, in which was carried on the work which Bede had begun, re-kindling in the west the flame of learning just at the moment it was expiring in France and Ireland. Under Egbert and his successor, Albert, the Northumbrian Church became famous for learning, and the Archbishop's school the most notable centre of education in Western Christendom. To Archbishop Albert belongs the honour of collecting the splendid library, which in the eighth century is spoken of as "The Flower of Britain."—Albert's schoolmaster was Alcuin, who, after the Archbishop's death, resided at the Court of the Emperor Charlemagne, and helped him in the promotion and development of learning on the continent. It was at York that Alcuin himself had been trained, and so this school became the source of light to other lands.

Charlemagne was the foremost patron of literature in Europe, though he himself never succeeded in learning to write. He pressed Alcuin to take charge of the Palatine School, and for eight years (A.D. 782-790) Alcuin was busily engaged in teaching, writing, revising books for educational and ecclesiastical uses, organizing schools on the model of the Palatine School, by all which means he hoped to carry out the Emperor's design of restoring the knowledge of the *sacred languages* and the text of the Bible and Service books. According to an ancient MS., discovered in 1838 in Worcester Cathedral library (the original being of the twelfth century), Alcuin was a translator of the Bible. The MS. runs somewhat in this fashion: "Alcuin was a scholar, and translated the books. Through these were taught our people in English. These Bishops preached in Christendom. These taught our people in English." (Here follows a list.) "Their light was not dark, but it burned beautifully."

Alfred the Great, to whose memory there was not long since erected a statue in the Market Place of Wantage, now comes before us. Cœdmon, Bede and Alcuin were Northumbrians. When, by the action of the Danes, literature was driven out

S. Mary's  
Abbey  
York.

Worcester  
Cathedral.

Alfred the  
Great.