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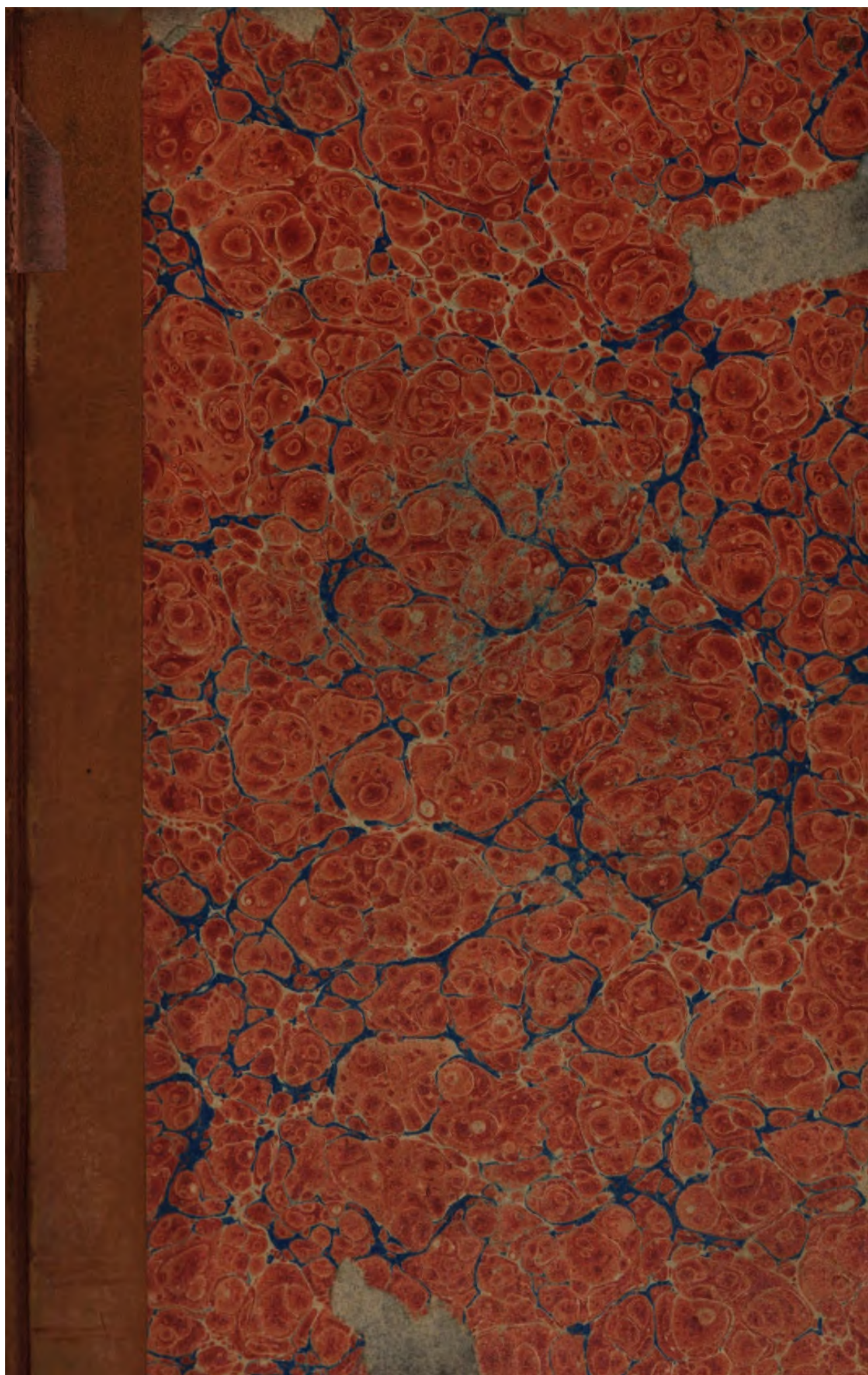
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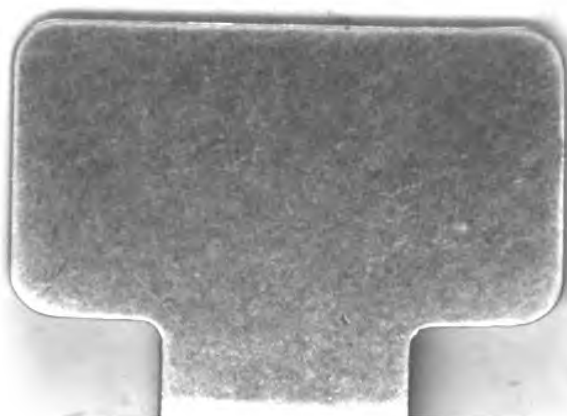
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THE DAWN
OF
MODERN CIVILIZATION:

OR,
SKETCHES OF THE SOCIAL CONDITION
OF EUROPE,

FROM
THE TWELFTH TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

Instituted 1799.

1847.



PREFACE.

THE sketches now submitted to the public are intended to form a sequel to "GLIMPSES OF THE DARK AGES." In the preface to that work, it was remarked, that in the twelfth century a new epoch in European society commenced; that new social elements were formed; that old ones received new life; and that events and institutions made their appearance, which belong to the later period of social progress. In this volume, an attempt is made to develop some of the leading phenomena of society, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century—the period of the dawn of modern civilization.

The same plan is pursued in this, as in the former work. A few glimpses are given of the social condition of Europe ; but no attempt is made at historical detail.

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DAWN
OF
MODERN CIVILIZATION.

CHAPTER I.
RELIGION.

SECTION I.

SECULAR CLERGY.

“JESUS CHRIST, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, has so established his government and his priesthood in the church, that the government should be sacerdotal, and the priesthood should be royal, as Peter in his epistle, and Moses in the law, have testified, appointing one over all the rest, whom he has ordained his vicar upon earth ; so that, as to Christ every knee must bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth ; so all must regard and obey the pope, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd. Him, therefore, secular kings should so venerate, for the sake of God, as that they may not consider themselves rightly

to rule unless they endeavour devotedly to serve him.”* Such were the proud pretensions set forth by Innocent III. at the beginning of the thirteenth century, in a letter which he wrote to the pusillanimous king John of England. From the pontificate of Gregory VII., the papal claims had been increased in arrogance : they had now reached their climax ; and the noon-day of the papacy may be considered as extending to the time of Boniface VIII., or throughout the thirteenth century.† The progress of its dominion exhibits one of the most remarkable facts in the history of the world. It was a form of tyranny the most appalling.

“ Ere it came,
Its shadow stretching far and wide was known,
And two who looked beyond the visible sphere,
Gave notice of its coming. He who saw
The Apocalypse ; and he of elder time,
Who, in an awful vision of the night,
Saw the four kingdoms, distant as they were ;—
Those holy men ; well might they faint with fear.”

It rose by degrees ; and they who laid the foundation had no idea of what the superstructure would be. Various causes contributed to its progress. The decline of learning, political changes, the ambition of popes, the servility of the clergy, the superstition of the age, the cultivation of architecture, painting, and music in the service of the church, the vices and virtues of distinguished ecclesiastics,

* Innocent III. Ep. 131, ad Joannem Anglorum R. Rymer's *Federa*, vol. i. 119. † Hallam.

the sagacious plans of some, the infirmity and ignorance of others, their ambition and their piety, their folly and their craft, together with the operation of uncontrolled circumstances, moving in the same direction, all contributed to produce and establish the system. A combination of manifold agencies was for ages employed in weaving that fine and curious network which was stretched further and wider, till it became "a covering spread over all nations," including and confining within its fatal meshes the bodies and the souls of men.

The supremacy of the papal power is the great fact which first strikes the attention on looking at the condition of Europe, at the opening of the period under review. Numerous are the relations in which it stands, but our observations are confined, by the nature of this work, to its bearing on the temporal interests of society. An illustration of the malign aspect it wore towards the civil liberties of mankind, is afforded in the bull issued by Innocent against the barons of England, who had nobly wrung the Great Charter from their worse than contemptible sovereign. "On the part of the omnipotent God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by the authority, also, of the blessed Peter and Paul, his apostles, and by the common consent of our brethren, we reprobate and condemn a treaty of this kind; prohibiting, under pain of our anathema, the king from presuming to observe, and the barons and their accomplices from daring to

exact its conditions.”* The bull was treated by the barons with the contempt it deserved, when the angry pontiff directed the bishops solemnly to publish throughout England the papal interdict, until they should satisfy their lord the king for the injuries they had done him, and faithfully return to their allegiance. Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, acted on this occasion a part worthy of an Englishman, and refused to inflict the Roman ban.

In connexion with the story of king John, every one remembers the legate Pandulph, to whom, at a place near Dover, the monarch, on his knees, offered the kingdom, and paid tribute of 1000 marks. The proud churchman flung the money on the ground—an act characteristic of papal insolence ; and then stooped to gather up the money—an act equally characteristic of papal cupidity. That man was the type of a class of papal emissaries who, from the time of Gregory VII., exercised a very powerful influence over temporal as well as ecclesiastical affairs. The *legati a latere* were invested with the highest powers, and during the period of their legation were honoured as the pope himself, exercising supreme authority, and receiving and deciding appeals to the Roman see.† Their habit of intermeddling with the political affairs of Europe, which was always regulated by the papal policy of depressing the civil, and raising the ecclesiastical

* Rymer's *Federa*, vol. i. 135. † Du Cange: *voc. Legatus*.

power, in society ; together with their extravagant demands upon the churches for their support, rendered them social pests of the most alarming kind.*

Another prop of the Roman see, and an engine of Roman oppression, was found in the canon law, which was founded on the rescripts of the popes, and, in the thirteenth century, reduced to a regular system of jurisprudence. It was based on the principle, that the laws of laymen could not bind the church, and that subjects owed no allegiance to excommunicated lords. So extensively was this body of laws applied, that it almost entirely supplanted the jurisdiction of civil courts—orphans, widows, strangers, pilgrims, lepers, and crusaders, being brought under the jurisdiction of the church—breaches of contract and of the nuptial bond, embezzlement of marriage portions and dowers, cases of perjury, usury, incest, and adultery, being deemed spiritual offences. Almost all persons and causes came within the cognizance of this ubiquitous tribunal. The frequent changes and additions introduced into the canon law made it most troublesome and vexatious, both to litigants and advocates ; but what constitutes a far graver charge, the principles of the supreme authority of the church on which it was avowedly based, and the spirit of ecclesiastical usurpation and bigotry in which it was always administered, could not

* See instances in Giesler, Text Book, etc., il. 260. Fleury says, that "these legations were golden mines for the cardinals, who used to return laden with cash."

fail to make it—what it really was in a multitude of cases—an instrument for grinding and oppressing the people. This system of jurisprudence was felt by the civil power to be a sore evil, and in some countries, especially in England, its authority was stoutly resisted.

The multiplicity of matters with which papal Rome interfered, furnished abundant employment for her spiritual monarch and his ministers. Bernard “represents the consistory of the cardinals, as a parliament and a sovereign tribunal, occupied in judging causes from morning to night ; and the pope, who presided, as so encumbered with affairs that he had scarcely breathing time. The court was full of solicitors, pleaders, counsellors, self-interested, passionate, disingenuous men, seeking only to overreach their antagonists, and to grow rich by fleecing others.”* To manage all this business, numerous officers were necessary, so that during the thirteenth century, the boasted successors of Peter—the fisherman of Galilee—were surrounded by a court, and attended by a retinue, surpassing the group of kings. To meet the expenses thus incurred, the most shameless extortions were practised, and Christendom was universally oppressed. Loud and deep were the murmurs of the people, exclaiming, “Rome, who is the mother of the churches, shows herself to others, not so much a mother, as a cruel step-dame. The scribes and Pharisees sit there, placing on

♦ Fleury : Jortin's Remarks, v. 282.

men's shoulders burdens too heavy to be borne.* They seize the spoil of the provinces, as if they sought to renew the wealth of Cræsus." The sale of indulgences formed an immense source of revenue, and materially contributed to the support of pontifical splendour; while, at the same time, it undermined the first principles of our holy faith, and became a fountain of the foulest immorality. A more impious delusion was never invented by the father of lies, nor a greater social curse inflicted, even by him, upon mankind. The market in which this diabolical traffic was carried on was ever open; but Boniface VIII., not satisfied with the ordinary demand for his infamous wares, instituted, in the year 1300, the papal jubilee, which was a sort of holy fair, for the purpose of attracting pilgrims to Rome, as the purchasers of absolution. And well it succeeded. Multitudes, of all classes, came thronging to the city, and crowded her gates; and it is said that, during the festival, two priests stood day and night by the altar of St. Peter, holding in their hands *rakes*, with which they scraped up the profuse offerings, which were poured on the floor, in heaps, by the infatuated votaries. "The sensible decline of the papacy is to be dated from the pontificate of Boniface VIII., who had strained its authority to a higher pitch than any of his predecessors. There is a spell wrought by uninterrupted good fortune, which captivates

* Joan. Saresb.

men's understandings, and persuades them, against reasoning and analogy, that violent power is immortal and irresistible. The spell is broken by the first change of success. We have seen the dissipation of this charm at work with a rapidity to which the events of former times bear as remote a relation, as the gradual processes of nature to her deluges and volcanoes. In tracing the papal empire over mankind, we have no such marked and definite crises of revolution. But slowly, like the retreat of waters, or the stealthy pace of old age, that extraordinary power over human opinion has been subsiding for five centuries."* The memorable struggle between Boniface and Philip the Fair, king of France, which ended in the imprisonment, insult, and death of the former, gave a severe blow to the temporal power of the papacy; and the quiet submission of succeeding popes to the French monarch, showed that the mighty hand had now become nerveless, which, some years earlier, would not have allowed the slightest dishonour to pass without wreaking its revenge. There can be no doubt that the corruption and rapacity of the papal court, with which the visits of pilgrims and crusaders, in the thirteenth century, made so many acquainted, extensively produced feelings of disgust. Materials were supplied for those songs of bitter satire and unsparing rebuke, which soon became common in Europe, and inflamed the minds of multi-

* Hallam.

tudes with a just hatred of the system which, once perhaps, had inspired their ignorant veneration. The removal of the papal court to Avignon—the Babylonish captivity, as many called it—the renunciation of the temporal authority of the pontiff by several Italian cities—the brilliant but brief career of Rienzi—the schism which occurred in the popedom, exhibiting two, and even three, claimants at a time to St. Peter's chair—and, finally, the attempt, at the council of Constance, systematically to limit the papal prerogatives, were signs that weakness had already come over the mighty, and portended that its strength was still further to be impaired.

The state of the clergy in general was what might be expected from the example set them by their spiritual fathers—Children imitate their parents; and provinces, in a great measure, derive their character from the parent city. “What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?” As Rome under the emperors was the pattern city to which other municipalities were conformed, so Rome under the popes was the pattern church which other ecclesiastical communities imitated. Hence, even in the twelfth century, we find the fervent St. Bernard pouring out his fruitless lamentations over the worldliness, the extravagance, and venality of the priesthood: “The insolence of the clergy troubles the earth and infests the church;”—

“they seek ecclesiastical dignitaries, not for the salvation of their souls, but for the sake of wealth ;”—“they are the ministers of Christ, but they serve antichrist.” Indignantly does this censor of clerical morals rebuke his brethren for their pride of apparel, their costly furniture, their luxury at table, and their riotous festivities, bringing these sweeping charges against deans, archdeacons, bishops, and archbishops.* As the popes advanced in pride and splendour, the clergy kept pace with them ; and lamentations, even more bitter than St. Bernard’s, and reflecting more upon the illiteracy, and the revolting licentiousness of the clerical orders, might be supplied, *ad nauseam*, from the pages of those writers who panted for reformation in the church. It is stated, in reference to the fourteenth century, by an historian, who supports the assertion by abundant citations from contemporary authors, that the constant efforts of the synods to restrain the dissolute clergy were of no avail. The laity were glad to secure their families in any way from the attacks of priestly lust, and favoured, or even furthered, the permanent connexion of their priests with concubines. Thus it happened that in many countries such connexions were openly suffered among those whose holiness was supposed to be sullied by wedlock. The pecuniary mulcts imposed by many of the synods for such excesses, were soon converted into a regular tax. Every

* Bernardi Opera, tom. ii. 61.

attempt of the secular authorities to interfere for the remedy of these abuses was repelled by the church as an invasion of its rights.* Through the fifteenth century, complaints of luxury and immorality continued to prevail, demonstrating the need and preparing for the arrival of the Protestant Reformation. As the clergy formed a large portion of society, these facts, directly, throw light upon the moral condition of Europe at the time ; nor can we fairly doubt that in them we have a specimen of the moral state of the people at large. All this viciousness among the professed religious guides of mankind could not fail to encourage and nourish the corrupt propensities of the human heart. It would seem that, in connexion with this prevalent immorality, there was a spirit of irreverence generally evinced towards the ordinances of religion. Those ordinances were still studiously observed by the priesthood, and were not outwardly neglected by the people, but earnest-minded worship was displaced by the most undevout conduct in the public services of the church. A sceptical feeling in reference to religion probably made rapid way in society toward the close of the period before us, even among those who still observed the formalities of devotion. It has been already intimated that the corrupt state of the papal church opened the eyes of many, and convinced them of the falsehood of the system : but it is to be feared,

* Giesler, iii. 84.

that in numerous cases, a distinction was not made between Christianity and popery, and that the former was left to bear the iniquities of the latter. Barclay, in his "Ship of Fools," a book published in 1509, gives a curious description of the conduct of the people at church, both priests and laity, which shows that they were not only utterly regardless of the true worship of God, but did not behave with common decency in the places professedly devoted to his honour—priests in the choir repeated to each other "fayned fables," or talked of the battayles done perchance in Britain, France, or Flanders, "in the midst of matins," "much rather than the service for to hear"—and some others, in making responses, repeated

" All fables and jestes of Robin Hood,
Or other trifles that scantly are so good."

While the priests were preaching, the people were jesting and telling "tales of viciousnesse"—

" Into the church then comes another sotte
Without devotion, getting up and downe,
Or to be seene and to shew his garded cote ;
Another on his fiste, a sparhawke or fawcone,
Or else a cokow, and so wasting his shone,
Before the aulters he to and fro doth wander
With even as great devotion as a gander.
In comes another his houndes at his tayle,
With lynes and leases, and other like baggage
His dogges bark, so that withouten fail,
The whole church is troubled by their outrage.
So innocent youth learneth the same of age,
And their lewde sounde doth the church fill,
But in this noyse the good people keep them still.
One time the hawkes bell jangleth high,
Another time they flutter with their wings ;

And now the houndes barking strikes the sky
 Now sound their feet, and now the chaynes ringes
 They clap with their handes, by such maner thinges
 They make of the church for their hawkes a mew
 And kenel for their dogges which they afterwards rewe.
 There are handled pleadinges and causes of the lawe
 There are made bargaynes of divers maner thinges
 Buyinges and sellinges scarce worth a hawe
 And there are for lucre contrived false leasinges
 And while the priest his mass or matin singes,
 These fooles which to the church do repayre
 Are chatting and babbling as it were in a fayre." *

This quaint description brings very vividly before us the irreligious spirit of the times, and indicates that the teachers of the church, who could behave in this way, had no faith in their own religion, and that the people very widely participated in the scepticism of their unworthy guides.

Still we must be careful not to forget that among the clergy, during the age under review, there were some who were brilliant exceptions to the general rule. With deep veneration we look back to such men as Bernard, Anselm, Groteste, and Bradwardine; and in reading the monastic annals of the period, we catch here and there refreshing gleams of simple-hearted piety struggling in the clouds of superstition. And, doubtless, many more names utterly perished from the earth are written in the Lamb's book of life—names like those in Sardis, who, amidst wide-spread pollution, "defiled not their garments." The influence of such men could not fail to be beneficial to a very considerable extent. They, no doubt, in their respective spheres, corrected social evils, and

* Barclay's "Ship of Fools."

trained up characters likeminded with themselves. While we cannot shut our eyes to the prevalent corruption of the age, we joyfully recognise all the goodness of which any reasonable evidence can be given. We hail the fact, that, from the twelfth century onwards, there was a decided increase in the proportion of learned, virtuous, and pious men, to the ignorant, impure, and wicked. The shadows of the night of the dark ages still hung in thick clouds over Europe, in some quarters denser than ever, but still the dawn of a better day was breaking, of which many indications will be pointed out in these pages ; and, to go no further, in such characters as we have mentioned we discover some hopeful streaks of light gilding the horizon.

SECTION II.

MONKS AND FRIARS.

THE old monastic orders were, in the eleventh century, more corrupt than ever. Those who deplored this state of things sought to reform it by the institution of new orders, pledged to a more severe discipline.. Hence rose the order of the Carthusians in 1084, the order of Fontevraud in 1094, the order of St. Antony in 1095, and the order of the Cistercians in 1098—of these, the Carthusians and the Cistercians seem to have been the most respectable. Many of them devoted themselves to the copying of manuscripts, and

did something towards the revival of classical learning.

There was a singular character in the thirteenth century, named Guyot de Provens, first a vagrant minstrel, and afterwards a monk, who went about visiting these orders, that he might select one of them in which to cast his future lot. He was evidently destitute of religion, and in his peregrinations was seeking a comfortable home rather than a school for religious improvement. His report indicates that the Carthusians were strict in the observance of their rules—that they practised much self-denial, following a course of life utterly at variance with the minstrel's taste. But the Cistercians whom he met with, he says, enjoyed themselves; the abbots and cellarers had ready money, good wine, and large fish: sometimes oppressing the poor, whose cottages they seized; and in some instances desecrating their own chapels and churchyards, parts of which they turned into stables and pigsties.* The Grandmontines, he observes, besides fondness for good cheer, were remarkable for their foppery; they painted their cheeks, and washed and covered up their beards at night, as women do their hair. Of the order of St. Antony, the gossiping minstrel tells an odd story:—"They have established an hospital which has neither funds nor revenues; but by the abundant alms which they have the secret

* Generally speaking, however, the Cistercians, under their famous abbot, St. Bernard, were strict disciplinarians.

of amassing, it procures them immense riches. With a bell in the hand, preceded by relics and a cross, they run over, begging, not only all France, but Germany and Spain. There is neither fair nor town, nor oven, nor mill, where they have not a purse suspended. At the season of the vintage they go into the country to beg wine. The good wives give them linen, rings, hoods, clasps, girdles, cheeses, gammons of bacon, in one word, all they have got; and everything comes alike to them. This year their pigs will bring them five thousand silver marks; for there is not a town or castle in France where they are not fed." He further represents them as accumulating personal property, and as by no means strict in their moral habits.*

There can be no doubt that the new orders were, for the most part, worldly and corrupt enough in the thirteenth century, and this occasioned a fresh effort for the reformation of monachism. The off-shoots which were now produced, were, in many respects, the most remarkable and powerful developments of the monastic principle which had yet appeared. A modification of the system was adopted, suited to the times. It was felt that the old theory of monachism, as a life of penitence and seclusion from the world, would not do; and that, while abstinence and self-denial ought to be practised, direct intercourse with men should be sought, with a view to their

* Fosbrook's Monachism, p. 66.

religious improvement. It was also conceived, that nothing could so effectually preserve the integrity and purity of the religious orders, as to bind them down most strictly to a life of poverty, by rendering them dependent on the casual charity of others. Hence appeared the famous mendicant orders, who soon obtained such great influence in the church and the world, and who proved, for some time, very powerful supports to the papal throne. Dominic of Osma, and Francis of Assisi, about the same time, the beginning of the thirteenth century, laid the foundation of the two chief mendicant orders, called respectively after their names, the Dominican and Franciscan friars. Dominic was a man of extraordinary power, sternness, and eloquence, and manifested all those qualities in the military campaigns which he zealously carried on against the faithful remnant of the church in Languedoc. Francis was an ardent enthusiast, a spiritual mystic, rigidly austere in his personal habits, and, according to his followers, who held his character in extravagant admiration, favoured with visions of the most marvellous kind. Perhaps the Dominicans at first were only a band of itinerating preachers, and the Franciscans a religious society relying on their practice of begging for their support; but the Dominicans soon became beggars as well as preachers; and the Franciscans preachers as well as beggars. Popular eloquence in the pulpit was seen to be an engine of great power, and sturdy mendicity

(*radant pro eleemosyna confidenter*, was the language of the Franciscan rules*) was discovered to be a mine of great wealth.† Two other orders of friars, the Carmelites and the Augustinians, arose about the same time; but the Dominicans and the Franciscans were the chief fraternities. They were specially patronized by the popes, who conferred on them peculiar privileges, and were extraordinary favourites with the people, who preferred them to the secular clergy. "They were welcome," says Matthew Paris, who owed them no small grudge, "as though they had been the angels of God." According to the lively picture of them sketched by that historian, they presumed in no small degree upon their privileges and popularity, and treated the secular clergy with most unbrotherly contempt. "They ask," he observes, "with the greatest impudence, even religious men, 'Have you confessed?' to which if they reply 'Yes,' they proceed to inquire, 'To whom?' 'To my priest, to be sure.' 'And who is that idiot? He knows nothing

* Regula, c. iv. Hospinian de Origine Mon. p. 232.

† Chaucer, in his own admirable style, hits off the begging power of the friars—

"There was no man no where so virtuous.
He was the best beggar in all his hous,
And gave a certain farmè for the graunte,
None of his brethren camè in his haunte,
For though a widowè had but a shoo,
(So pleasaunt was his in principio)
Yet woldè have a farthing ere he went.
His purchasè was better than his rent."

It is not unlikely that Chaucer had some Franciscan friar in his eye. Perhaps he had not forgotten the five shillings he had to pay for the broil in Fleet-street. See p. 27.

of theology. He has never studied the Decretals;* he is not able to solve a single question. They are blind leaders of the blind. Come to us, who know how to distinguish with the greatest nicety who can lay open to you the difficult and secret things of God.' " By such means they prevailed upon many, even persons of distinction, to forsake their own priests and to make them their confessors; the consequence of which was the bitter animosity of the parochial priesthood. The mendicants soon forgot, or rather, with barefaced effrontery, violated their rules; for though poverty was their watchword, in twenty-four years after their commencement, Matthew Paris declares that "they had constructed edifices in England which rose to a regal altitude, their spacious and splendid houses exhibiting countless treasures."†

In the fourteenth century there stood in London a magnificent range of monastic buildings within the city walls, extending from the end of the Old Bailey to the Thames. Amidst what is now a scene of noise and bustle of carriages and carts, there were then to be found quiet cloisters, snug dormitories, a fine scriptorium, a spacious refectory, and a noble church, with grounds and gardens sloping down to the river side. This was the house of the Dominicans or Black Friars. It was founded by

* The foundation of canon law, in the study of which the mendicant friars distinguished themselves.

† Matt. Paris, ed. 1644, fol. 414.

Robert Kilwarby, in 1276, and was greatly enriched by the benefactions of Edward I. and queen Eleanor. The largest immunities were bestowed on this establishment. Within its four gates, and spacious walls, was in fact, a little town, free from the jurisdiction of the city authorities, and subject only to the ecclesiastical superior of the brotherhood; a privilege often abused by persons who fled there for refuge from the arm of the law. The kings of England sometimes entered "the good and comely tower at the bend of the wall," and there tarried with honour, enjoying the hospitality which the wealthy prior well knew how to afford; and under the pavement of its celebrated chapel, there slept many a noble lord and lady, wrapped in the habit of the order; for the Black Friars' robe was thought to have in it some potent spiritual virtue in warding off the attacks of the devil. Within that friary a large brotherhood passed their time in professed obedience to the rule of St. Austin, to which some severe additions were made by Dominic. If they acted up to their rules, which is very questionable, long periods were spent in silence; one or two hundred prayers were said in a day, and great abstinence was practised, especially from Holyrood to Easter. Friars in their white woollen tunics, and a long black woollen gown with a hood, might often be seen issuing from the gates, mingling with the citizens, visiting their habitations, or gathering round them large congregations by their popular preaching.

Not far off, on the site of what is now Christ Church, there stood the house of the Franciscans or Grey Friars.* If their monastery did not equal the abode of their brethren of the Dominican order, their church was more superb. Margaret, the second queen of Edward I., began the choir; Isabella, the queen of Edward II., and Philippa, the consort of Edward III., contributed largely to the building. If the Black Friars' church could boast of nobles being interred within its walls, the church of the White Friars could count its buried queens. Four were there interred, one of whom was Isabella, before named as a foundress. "I hope," says Pennant, "she was wrapped in friar's garments, for few stood more in need of a demonifuge. With wonderful hypocrisy, she was buried with the heart of her murdered husband on her breast."†

The Franciscans, with their long grey coats and hooded cloaks, their rope girdles and bare feet, vied with their black-robed brethren in their persuasive preaching, and equally persuasive begging. Jealousy, as might be expected, early arose between these mendicant orders, which led to violent controversies, heightened at length by certain doctrinal differences.

The mendicant orders sought to sustain their

* We may fancy it was one of these gentlemen with whom Chaucer was engaged in a violent affray:—"Geoffrey Chaucer was fined five shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet-street." Original Mem. in Spight,

† Pennant's London.

influence by learning, as well as by other less honourable means. The renowned Whittington built for the Grey Friars a fine library, one hundred and twenty-nine feet long, and twelve broad, with twenty-eight desks; and Leland relates that Thomas Wallden, a learned Carmelite, bequeathed to the same library, as many manuscripts of approved authors, written in capital Roman characters, as were then estimated at two thousand pieces of gold. He adds, that in his time it exceeded all others in London for multitude of books and antiquity of copies.*

A singular employment to which the Grey Friars sometimes betook themselves, may here be mentioned, as illustrative of the character of the age. Scripture plays, or mysteries, as they were called, being rude dramatic exhibitions of the facts related in the Bible, were then exceedingly popular. They were sometimes acted in churches, and sometimes on stages in the open air. Chester and Coventry were especially famous for these performances. Even as late as the twenty-fourth year of Henry VIII. a proclamation was issued respecting the Chester plays in the Whitsun weeks, in which it was stated that Henry Frances, sometime a monk, obtained "and gat of Clement, then bishop of Rome, one thousand days of pardon, and of the bishop of Chester at that time, forty days of pardon granted from thence-

* Warton's English Poetry, vol. ii. 90, last edit.

forth to every person resorting in a peaceable manner, with good devotion, to hear and see the said plays, from time to time, as oft as they shall be played within the said city.”* Coventry was equally distinguished by its mysteries. A theatre placed on wheels, and drawn about the city, gathered multitudes of people around to witness the grotesque representations of Scripture facts, from the creation of the world to the end of time. In 1456, queen Margaret was at Coventry, when she saw “alle the pagentes pleyde, save domes day, which might not be pleyde for lak of day.”† The trading companies were the performers at Chester, but the mysteries at Coventry were managed by the Grey Friars, by whom they were acted, says Dugdale, with mighty state and reverence. Whatever might be the motive which first led to these religious plays, they seem to have been ill suited, even in that rude age, to instruct the people, and to promote their veneration for Divine truth. Many of them were composed in the lowest style of buffoonery, and ministered to the uproarious mirth of the audience. Hence some of the stricter churchmen looked upon these performances with an unfavourable eye; they were forbidden by some of the older local constitutions and councils, and among the followers of Wickliff, at the end of the fourteenth cen-

* Harleian mss. No. 2013, quoted in Introduction to Chester Mysteries, published by Shakspeare Society.

† Coventry Mysteries, Shakspeare Society.

tury, the condemnation of these mysteries was louder than ever.* If they were used by the Grey Friars simply for the purpose of religious instruction, they reflect very much upon the character of their reverend performers, who could have possessed little power as religious teachers to have needed, to say the least, such very questionable accessories to their ministrations. We rather think they were adopted, simply with a view to secure the favour of the people, by amusing them; the good opinion of the lower classes being a prize for which the Grey Friars of all the religious orders of the day, were disposed to bid the highest price.

The influence of the mendicants was by no means favourable to the morals of the people. "I have in my diocese," said Fitzralph, archbishop of Armagh, "about two thousand persons who stand condemned by the censures of the church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which number scarcely fourteen have applied to me, or to my clergy, for absolution: yet they all receive the sacraments as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars."† This indicates the great facility with which the people obtained pardons from these itinerant priests, a fact to which many writers of that period bear witness; and no doubt one which contributed greatly to the popularity of these new orders. This

* Int. to Chester Plays, p. x.

† Foxe, Acts and Monuments.

complaint of the archbishop, by the way, discloses a most terrific glimpse of society—two thousand thieves, murderers, and other criminals, remaining at large, and even participating in religious ordinances! At the same time it proves the existence of a decided schism in the bosom of a church which has ever boasted of its unity, for here we have the friars admitting to communion the very persons whom the secular clergy denounced and excommunicated.

The corrupt habits and practices of the English friars of the fourteenth century were exposed by the two distinguished men who appear respectively as the fathers of English poetry and English prose. Chaucer, in his "Canterbury Tales," gives us a graphic picture of these men in his "Friar," and also in the "Limitour," mentioned in the Sumpnor's Tale. This keen observer of mankind describes them as licentious, profligate, and avaricious, "full of dalliance and fair language;" "easy to give penance," knowing well "the taverns in every town," begging at the beds of sick men, and asking of the housewives "mele and cheese or ellis corne." Chaucer would never have thus characterised the friars, had not the account been true respecting them as a class; of course, such descriptions would not apply to every individual; for there never was, perhaps, a body of men so corrupt, as not to have among their number some whose virtue raised them above their fellows. But Wickliff was a more grave and earnest enemy of the mendicant

orders. The poet aimed at the fraternity the shafts of his wit; but the reformer planted against them the artillery of reason and Scripture. As to the latter, the contest with the friars was a solemn death-struggle with religious falsehood and corruption. He did not merely assail the men and expose their vices, but he struck at the root of the system, and showed that the radical principles of the order were unscriptural, and productive of immense social evils. In his treatise against the order of friars, he confirms the truthfulness of Chaucer's poetic sketches :* and proceeding to search into the grounds of the institution, shows that in its very nature it was opposed to the interests of society and to Christ's gospel. No man of that age so steadily opposed them, and was in return so much the object of their revenge. Almost the only graphic story of the intrepid reformer which tradition has preserved, relates to his memorable contest with the mendicants. Smitten with sickness, this gospel doctor, as he was called, lay ill at Oxford, in whose schools his learning and ability as a theological professor made him illustrious. Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, and Augustinian, with four doctors of the university, and the same number of city aldermen, hastened to Wickliff's room, to extort from him, before he died, a confession of penitence and a recantation of his publicly-avowed opinions in reference to these fraternities. He quietly listened

* Reprinted in the first vol. of the Wickliff Society publications.

to their address, then beckoning to his servant, requested to be raised in his bed, when, fixing his sharp eye on his old antagonists, he exclaimed in a tone of decision, into which he threw all his remaining strength, "I shall not die, but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars." Nor can we help contrasting with the mendicant preachers, the parson of Lutterworth, pursuing his pastoral labours in that quiet little town, after the manner described by Chaucer.* Often in the bosom of his beloved people would he sigh over the corruptions and ignorance of the times, exclaiming, "O Christ, thy law is hidden thus; when wilt thou send thine angel to remove the stone, and to show thy truth unto thy flock!"† And as he uttered these lamentations he endeavoured to remove their cause by toiling in his study at the English translation of the Bible, thus becoming himself that angel of truth whom he prayed the Head of the church to send. Nor was it a novelty "to see the venerable Wickliff in a village pulpit surrounded by his rustic auditory, or in the lowest hovel of the poor, fulfilling his office at the bedside of the sick and the dying whether freeman or slave."‡ In that pulpit doctrines like these fell from his lips: "We

* *Canterbury Tales*—The Parson. Though the description by Chaucer may apply to Wickliff's pastoral labours, it by no means gives a full portrait of the reformer. Had the poet intended to describe that great man's whole character, he would have produced a very different sketch.

† *Tracts and Treatises of Wickliff*, p. 84.

‡ *Vaughan's Life of Wickliff*, ii. 13.

hold it as a part of our faith, that as our first parents had sinned, there must be atonement made for it, according to the righteousness of God." "The person who may make atonement for sin must needs be God and man. Men mark the passion of Christ and print it on their heart somewhat to follow it. It was the most voluntary passion that ever was suffered, and the most painful. It was most voluntary, and so most meritorious. We should know that faith is a gift of God, and that it may not be given to man except it be graciously. Thus all the good which men have is of God, and accordingly when God rewardeth a good work of man, he crowneth his own gift. If thou hast a full belief of Christ, how he lived here on the earth and how he overcame the world, thou also overcomest it as a kind son." Refreshing truths! How must they have dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, upon the hearts of Wickliff's parishioners! Doubtless, with such instructions, many in Lutterworth were turned from darkness to light, and were translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Some of them were no doubt his companions before the throne, and the crown of his joy in heaven, at the time when his enemies were employed on earth in digging his bones out of the grave, and flinging the burnt ashes into the river which skirted his churchyard.

After Wickliff's time the mendicants and

monastic orders of all kinds became more corrupt than ever, and finally lost their hold on popular favour. "Though this sort of men," observes Erasmus, "are so detested by every one, that it is reckoned unlucky so much as to meet them by accident, they think nothing equal to themselves, and hold it as a proof of their consummate piety, if they are illiterate as not to be able to read; and when their asinine voices bray out in the churches their psalms, which they count but cannot understand, then it is, they fancy that the ears of the saints above are enraptured with the harmony." "In this sentence Erasmus intimates, what is abundantly confirmed by other testimony, that the mendicant orders had lost their ancient hold upon the people. There was a growing sense of the abuses prevailing in the church, and a desire for a more scriptural and spiritual religion. Thus everything was prepared for the blow to be struck by Luther."*

SECTION III.

PILGRIMS.

In the middle ages persons might often be seen dressed in a long gown of coarse woollen cloth, wearing a large round hat turned up in front, with a srip for carrying provisions slung by their side, a rose or string of beads hanging on their arm, and a long staff with

* Hallam.

two knobs towards the top, grasped in their hand. Some of them were barefooted, and wore long beards. These persons were pilgrims, who, either as a supposed expiation of their sins, or from motives of piety, had left their homes to visit some famous shrine. Though such persons were to be found throughout the middle ages, they became far more numerous during the eleventh century and afterwards.

About that time an immense multitude repaired to Jerusalem to visit the holy sepulchre. The poor, the middle classes, women of noble rank, counts and princes, wended their way to the sacred spot, some from mistaken piety, others from a spirit of enterprise. Among many there was a desire to die in that land, that their bones might moulder in that hallowed soil.* For centuries afterwards numbers set their faces towards the east, and by land and sea pilgrims travelled to the Holy Land. A religious ceremonial preceded their journey, when they were sprinkled with holy water marked with the cross, and solemnly blessed by the priest. They made their wills, took leave of their friends, and then, sometimes alone, and at other times in large companies, departed on their pilgrimage. When they embarked on ship-board they sang the beautiful hymn of *Veni Creator*, during which the sailors spread their canvas, and the vessel got under weigh. The journey by land was in

* Glab. Radulph iv. c. 6.

those days extremely wearisome and perilous, yet it presented some attractions to the romantic and the enterprising.*

With his wallet and staff many a poor pilgrim set forth, supporting himself by begging, and seeking on his way the entertainment which was readily afforded at monasteries and hospitals. Pilgrims on their return were distinguished by bearing a palm, (whence they were called palmers,) and on reaching home were received with peculiar honour, sometimes by an ecclesiastical procession.†

Rome was another point of attraction to pilgrims. In the fourteenth century multitudes flocked to the papal jubilees. The inhabitants of Rome made a harvest at these times, and turning inn-keepers, required the rich pilgrims to pay no small price for the entertainment of themselves, their attendants, and horses. A special object of interest to the pilgrims at Rome was the veronique, or handkerchief, which, in the lying legends of

* From the "Paston Letters" it appears that pilgrims were treated with much respect, for we there find the following passage—referring to some pirates who visited the shores of England during the period of the wars between the white and red roses:—Agnes Paston says, they took two pilgrims, a man and a woman, and they robbed the woman and let her go, and led the man to the sea, and when they knew he was a pilgrim, they gave him money and set him again on land. From the same interesting collection it further appears that pilgrims were often made the bearers of letters. In reference to some prevalent sickness sir John Paston says, "I ensure you it is the most universal death that ever I wist in England: for by my truth I cannot hear by pilgrims that pass the country, nor none other man that rideth or goeth any country, that any borough town in England is free from that sickness."—Vol. i. p. 85; vol. ii. 63.

† Du Cange v. Palmifer.

the day, was said to have been thrown by a woman over the Saviour's face as he was carrying his cross, to wipe off the sweat and blood, upon which the handkerchief received the impress of his features. Another portrait of the Redeemer also excited much veneration, as it was said to have been produced in mosaic by miracle, on the dedication of the church built by Constantine immediately after his conversion. A copy of the veronique, worn either on the front of the cloak, or the hat, with the additional symbol of the cross keys on the former, marked the pilgrims who had visited the papal city.

The sepulchre of St. James, at Compostella, in Spain, was another famous place of rendezvous for the pilgrims of the middle ages, who, after visiting it, were distinguished by a scallop shell affixed to their hats. In England, too, there were shrines which our ancestors visited in large numbers. We have stood by the tomb of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury cathedral, and looked at the steps leading to the spot, all worn away by the pilgrims' footsteps, who, from time to time, came trooping there to seek for pardon, till the past has seemed to live before us, and the busy misguided multitudes to be once more crowding those stately aisles. We have heard them, to use the language of good William Thorpe, entering the city, with their singing, their bagpipes, their Canterbury bells, and their barking dogs, till they have made more noise

than if the king had come with his clarions and minstrels.* And as we have walked through the quiet town of Walsingham, in Norfolk, which still retains very much of an antique appearance, or roamed through the beautiful grounds that skirt the ruins of its far-famed priory, our imagination has re-peopled the scene with the groups of pilgrims, who came gossiping along those streets, and through that fine old archway, up through the nave of the once stately church, to the shrine of our lady. The tinge of romance which pervades such recollections may amuse and cheat the fancy for a moment; but when, in the light of sober reason, we turn to look at the records of the period, respecting these pilgrimages, the illusion is dispelled, and deeply painful impressions of their true character are produced. Miserable were the superstitions of those times, when the offering of candles and waxen images were deemed acts of grateful piety; when kissing an old spur or a tattered garment was thought to have in it some spiritual virtue, and when the putting on of a dead king's hat was reckoned a certain cure for the headache—things daily done in the olden time at the shrine of Henry VI. in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. But graver charges may be brought against the practice of pilgrimage in those times, and may be substantiated by abundant evidence: gross immorality prevailed in those promiscuous

* See Thorpe's examination, State Trials.

companies of men and women. The recorded tales of these pilgrimages bear out the remark of Hallam. "This licensed vagrancy was naturally productive of dissoluteness, specially among the women. Our English ladies, in their zeal to obtain the spiritual treasures of Rome, are said to have relaxed the necessary caution about one that was in their own custody."* Wickliff had seen something of the system of pilgrimages, and mourned over their ruinous effects, while he rejoiced in the more excellent way of obtaining the Divine mercy. "Many think that if they give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of all the commandments of God, and, therefore, they take no heed how they keep them. But I say thee for certain, though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou each day hear many masses, and found chantries and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners, all this shall not bring thy soul to heaven. While if the commandments of God are revered to the end, though neither penny nor halfpenny be possessed, there shall be everlasting pardon and the bliss of heaven."†

* Middle Ages, chap. ix. p. 1.

† Vaughan's Life of Wickliff, vol. i. 312.

CHAPTER II.

CHIVALRY.

SECTION I.

ITS CHARACTER.

"A goodly usage of those antique times,
In which the sword was servant unto right,
When, not for malice and contentious crimes,
But all for praise, and proof of manly might,
The martial brood accustomed to fight;
Then honour was the meed of victory,
And yet the vanquished had no despite."

SUCH is the strain in which Spenser, one of the earliest and sweetest of our English bards, celebrates the age of chivalry. The bright hues of romance which clothe that period, have rendered it attractive to the eye of the poet; but much of its charm is dispelled when examined by the severer eye of the historian. From what we have observed of the writings, characters, and habits of those times, it seems very clear that the ideal of chivalry, the theory of the system, as well as its actual practice, has been greatly overrated.

It was the daughter of Feudalism. Its spirit was born and nursed in the castles of the middle ages, before the period to which our

present work is limited : but the institute, in its definite form and practical details, did not acquire consistency, and reach its full establishment, till about the twelfth or thirteenth century. It included a strange combination of religious sentiments, moral ideas, warlike habits, and romantic gallantry. "God and the ladies" was the favourite watchword of the knight : devotion to both was his characteristic profession : in theory, of course, the first place would be assigned to the Deity ; but, in fact, it was commonly given to the ladies. The impiety involved in such an association of ideas as the watchword of the knight presents, is most revolting to the Christian mind of the present day ; and it shows how ignorant and unscriptural was the boasted religion of chivalry : how destitute of those reverential views of God which Christianity unfolds, and how completely alienated from that pious and devout spirit which the New Testament inculcates. Nor will its moral sentiments bear to be tested by the ethical principles of the gospel. A proud sense of honour was the cardinal virtue into which the whole morality of the knights may be resolved ; and how different that is from the principle of benevolence, which is the basis of all Christian morality, must be apparent to every one. But the view which we have now to take of chivalry, relates to its character as a *social* element.

Though chivalry be an institute holding a

conspicuous place in the early history of modern civilization, yet it would be unfair to charge upon it altogether the actual state of society which prevailed during its most powerful development. Feudalism has been made responsible for the production of social evils which emanated from other sources, evils which in truth it was adapted in a measure to mitigate. The same remark may be made in relation to chivalry. The injustice, cruelty, and licentiousness of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were not entirely the fruits of chivalry, but were, in a great part, the consequences of long ages of ignorance, social degradation, and misrule; evils which that institute was designed to remedy. But the system was defective, it was inefficient, and in some cases rendered things worse instead of better. It made no provision whatever for the culture of the mind, but raised to the highest point of excellence mere polite accomplishments. "No one better understood to break a lance and to kiss a lady," was the highest eulogium that could be pronounced on a knight. The chief advice given by the experienced cavalier to the aspirant after the highest prize of chivalry, the favour of some admired lady, was that he should be careful in his dress, attentive to his person and manners, magnificent in his house, hospitable to visitors, opening his doors to all comers, playing deep, not lamenting his losses by gambling, keeping his arms bright, riding a

high-mettled steed ; first in the charge, last in the retreat.*

By inculcating a sense of honour, by denouncing breaches of faith, and violations of promise, as in the highest degree disgraceful, chivalry no doubt, in many instances, placed some checks on falsehood, perjury, and fraud, the characteristic vices of barbarism ; yet, in a multitude of cases, it proved a weak restraint on wickedness, and the history of some of the most illustrious knights, disclose facts which prove them to have been among the most dishonourable of mankind. To go no further, let any one read the story of our own Edward III., and mark his conduct in the war with Scotland in 1332, and say whether that chivalrous monarch did not basely violate the treaty which he had made with that country in 1328, and then cover his dishonourable designs with elaborate artifice ? By enjoining the duty of redressing the wrongs of the injured, chivalry might sometimes be of advantage to an oppressed victim, especially if it happened to be a lady ; but to speak of it as anything like an effectual barrier against injustice, generally considered, is to contradict the voice of history, which testifies to wars without end among the princes and barons of chivalry, for which not the slightest pretext of justice can be offered. The right of a cause was certainly no question for careful examination with these heroes before they threw the

* Fosbrooke : Monachism, 363.

weight of their sword into the scale. Peter the Cruel, of Castile, was one of the worst tyrants that ever sat on a throne, and yet we find Edward the Black Prince entering Spain as his ally to assist in restoring him to power, with the promise of Biscay, as the reward of his valorous aid. Much has been said of the courtesy which it nourished, and this was one of its chief advantages. It unquestionably softened the manners of society, and spread over the intercourse of the higher classes a film of seemliness, a habit of polite demeanour,—but alas for the commonalty : in reference to them the knight put off his courtesy, and treated such ignoble beings with the most ferocious cruelty. Edward the Black Prince, “the mirror of chivalry,” whose courtesy to his illustrious captives after the victory of Poitiers, has been so often praised, behaved more like a savage than a man, to the poor citizens at the taking of Limoges. “It was a most melancholy business,” says Froissart; “for all ranks, ages, and sexes cast themselves on their knees before the prince begging for mercy, but he was so inflamed with passion and revenge that he listened to none, but all were put to the sword, wherever they could be found, even those who were not guilty.”* Yet amidst all this barbarity towards the common people, the courtesy of the knight gleamed forth when he witnessed the gallant defence of the city walls by a band of cavaliers—and as

* Chronicles by Johnes, vol. iv. p. 103.

a reward of their valour he spared their lives. The liberality of the knight was something like his courtesy ; for it was associated with a sovereign contempt for the rights of those who stood without the pale of honour. A poor knight once implored of Henry, count of Champagne, a marriage portion for his two daughters. A rich burgess who heard the request, replied to the petitioner, "My lord has already given away so much that he has nothing left." "Sir villain," rejoined the count, "you do not speak the truth in saying I have nothing to give, when I have got yourself;" and immediately delivered him up to the knight, who, seizing his collar, and making him prisoner, would not liberate him till he had paid a ransom of five hundred pounds. This story is related by Joinville, a French knight and writer of the age of Louis, as an instance of the count's generosity, "not at all struck with the facility of a virtue exercised at the cost of others," nor at all displeased at this flagrant violation of common honesty. In relation to gallantry, the code of morals adopted by the knights, introduced the most absurd refinements of the tender passion, elevating woman to the rank of a goddess, and prescribing as her due a sort of religious worship. The practice of these lovers ran into the most ridiculous excesses of devotion to the fair ones whose charms had won their hearts; as for example, when some of Edward's young knights put a patch over one eye, vowing

never to take it off, till they had signalized themselves in the eyes of their mistresses by their valorous deeds. But in connexion with all this folly the grossest licentiousness prevailed, unexampled in more recent times, but abundantly attested by the fictions which were the only popular reading of the age, pervaded as they are by "a licentious spirit, not of the lighter kind which is usual in such compositions, but indicating a general dissoluteness in the intercourse of the sexes."* In reference to war, if chivalry inspired the valour of the knight with something like generosity towards an equal foe, we have seen that it in no degree softened the horrors of that curse when it fell on the lower orders. At the same time, by surrounding a military life with the sanctions of religion, it gave greater permanency and power to that greatest of all social evils; nor should it be forgotten that, by fostering a spirit of valour for its own sake, by sending out the knight to rove over the world in quest of martial glory, it dissevered military courage from patriotism, which is its only redeeming association. It nourished war for its own sake, as a thing to be honoured and loved; nor did the knight disdain to adopt the meanest artifices, to gain his point. The following story respecting the taking of the town and castle of Thurie in the Albigois, related by one of these worthies to the historian Froissart, will illustrate the chivalrous proceedings of the

* Hallam, chap. ix. part ii.

fourteenth century in this respect, and also throw light on a rural little spot in one of the provinces of France. "I will tell you by what means I conquered it," says Basfot de Mauleon. "On the outside of the town and castle there is a beautiful spring of water, where every morning the women of the city come to fill their pails and other vessels; which having done, they carry them back on their heads. Upon this I formed my plan, and taking with me fifty men from the castle of Cuillet, we rode all day over heaths, and through woods, and about midnight I placed an ambuscade near Thurie. Myself with only six others disguised as women, with pails in our hands, entered the meadow very near the town, and hid ourselves in a heap of hay: for it was about St. John's day, and the meadows were mown, and making into hay. When the usual hour of opening the gates arrived, and the women were coming to the fountain, each of us then took his pail, and having filled it placed it on his head and made for the town, our faces covered with our handkerchiefs, so that no one could have known us. The women that met us, said, 'Holy Mary! how early must you have risen this morning.' We replied in feigned voices, and passed on to the gate, where we found no other guard but a cobbler mending shoes. One of us sounded his horn as a notice for the ambuscade to advance. The cobbler, who had not paid any attention to us, on hearing the horn, cried out, 'Hold! who

is it that has blown the horn?" We answered, 'It is a priest who is going into the country: I know not whether he be the curate or chaplain of the town.' 'That is true,' replied he; 'it is sir Francis, our priest, who likes to go early to the field in search of hares.' Our companions soon joined us when we entered the town, and found no one prepared to defend it. Thus did I gain the town and castle of Thurie, which has been to me of greater profit, and more annual revenue, than this castle and all its dependencies are worth."*

At the very best, then, chivalry must be deemed a defective and inefficient system of social discipline. However bright the ideal character which floated before the imagination of the ancient knight, it was composed of virtues restricted in their range, coupled with a proud contempt of the inferior orders; and even that ideal character seems to have had little effect in stimulating a practical approximation to its standard of excellence. How different the spirit of Christianity from the spirit of chivalry! "Be pitiful, be courteous," is the injunction of the New Testament; while the range which it gives for the exercise of such virtues, is extensive as the human race. Universal love is inculcated in its pages, including the exercise of that true politeness which has been so felicitously defined to be benevolence in little things. "Honour all men," is another of its noble precepts, teaching us to look on

* Froissart, vol. vii. 226.

the spiritual nature of man, apart from all the adventitious distinctions of rank and wealth, as claiming sincere respect : nor is the beautiful character of the Christian, as portrayed in the sacred record, merely ideal ; it has been embodied in the lives of "a multitude which no man can number," through the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, who has renovated their fallen nature, and subdued their selfishness and pride.

SECTION II.

THE KNIGHT.

WE shall best comprehend the ceremonies, customs, and habits of chivalry, by tracing the career of a youth, of gentle blood, through the different stages by which he approached to the attainment of knightly honours.

Noble birth, except in a few particular cases, was an indispensable requisite in an aspirant after knighthood. The scions of nobility were, at an early age, devoted to the profession of chivalry. Their earliest education had a reference to its pursuits. The boy of seven was placed in the court of the sovereign, or the family of the baron, in the capacity of a *page*, where it was his office to attend on his master or mistress, to follow them in the chase, to accompany them in their walks, to appear in their train on occasions of festivity and display, to deliver their messages, to serve at

table, and, especially, to fill their lord or lady's cup. By this sort of training, they acquired the physical accomplishments, and the easy and graceful manners, so essential to the character of a knight. At fourteen, the youth was admitted to the rank of an esquire. He was presented at the altar by his parents, who each held a lighted taper, and commended him to the officiating priest, by whom he was then girded with a consecrated sword, which he wore ever afterwards. He still continued to perform domestic duties in times of peace, directing inferior servants, preparing the table for the banquet, and waiting upon the ladies in the ball room. On him, too, devolved the duty of doing the honours of hospitality to the noble strangers, knights, ladies, and squires, who visited the castle. But, from the period of being girded with the sword, military duties more particularly demanded his attention, and inspired his ardour. He kept the armour of his lord burnished and ready for use, attended him to the battle or the tournament, led his horse, held his stirrup, carried his helmet, and sought, by deeds of heroism in the field, to merit the same high distinction which his master wore. When he had attained the age of twenty-one, that distinction was within his reach, though it was sometimes deferred to allow longer time for the establishment of his claim to the honour by valorous deeds, or to permit of his receiving the much-craved prize, at the hand of some admired knight.

Religious ceremonies accompanied his admission to the knightly order. After being stripped of his garments, and put into a bath, symbolical of moral purification, he was clad in white, and required to keep a rigorous fast for twenty-four hours. At eventide he entered the church, and spent the night in prayer. In the morning, he confessed to the priest, received at his hands the eucharist, and listened to an address on the duties which, in his new vocation, he would have to perform. With his hands joined and lifted up to heaven, he approached the altar steps, where the priest, blessing his sword, placed around his neck the baldric by which it hung. Then, approaching the lord who was to knight him, (for the power of conferring the honour was not confined to kings,) he was solemnly asked what were his motives for desiring to enter the noble order, to which he replied, and then promised to perform all knightly duties. He was now clothed in armour, his spurs being first put on, then his coat of mail, afterwards his cuirass, brassets, and gauntlets, which ceremony was sometimes performed by ladies. The lord then *dubbed* him by giving three blows on his neck with the flat of his sword, and pronouncing the words, "In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I make thee knight; be brave, hardy, and loyal." The young knight then assumed his helmet, and mounting his richly caparisoned steed, which had been led into the church, brandishing his sword, waving

his lance, and exhibiting his dexterity in arms—he rode forth to the multitudes, who waited outside the castle walls, or in the city streets, to welcome the new-made cavalier. He was now exonerated from the discharge of the inferior duties which belonged to him as an esquire, and had a right to wear a seal ring, to assume his coat of arms, and bear the title of sir knight. The crested helmet, pennant-crowned lance, golden spurs, rich housings on his horse, and especially the scarlet mantle, were his distinguishing signs in battle, and at the tilt and tourney. The streamer or pennant, floating over the castle tower, indicated the knightly honours of its owner; and the casque, which was sometimes placed over the gateway, betokened that chivalrous hospitality would be afforded within its walls to the noble stranger. But our hero at present has only attained to the class of knight bachelors, or simple knights. A higher distinction exists, that of knights bannerets. In addition to superior valour, the possession of a certain estate, and the ability to bring fifty lances into the field, entered into the qualification of a knight of this class. The ceremony of creating a banneret consisted simply in cutting off the pennant, and rendering the banner square. Of this, Froissart gives an example, at the battle of Navaretto. “When the sun was risen, it was a beautiful sight to view the battalions with their bright armour, glittering with its beams. The prince, (Edward,) with a few

attendants, mounted a small hill, and saw, very clearly, the enemy marching straight towards them. Sir John Chandos advanced in front of the battalions with his banner uncased in his hands. He presented it to the prince, saying, 'My lord, here is my banner: I present it to you, that I may display it in whatever manner shall be most agreeable to you; for, thanks to God, I have now sufficient lands to enable me to do so, and maintain the rank which it ought to hold.' The prince, Don Pedro, being present, took the banner in his hands, which was blazoned with a sharp stake gules on a field argent; after having cut off the tail, to make it square, he displayed it, and returning it to him by the handle, said, 'Sir John, I return you your banner. God give you strength and honour to preserve it.'* The square banner, instead of the pennant, might now wave over sir John's castle, for such was the distinction which marked the residence of the knight banneret. These details will give some idea of the form and the spirit of chivalry, and throw some broad lights upon the general character of the age in which its most cherished institute, its chief school of social discipline, was so strongly marked by frivolous and childish customs.

* Froissart : *Chronicles*, vol. iii. 304.

SECTION III.

THE CRUSADES.

IN the feudal castles of the eleventh century, there were often seen pilgrims from the Holy Land. Many a palmer, who had paid his devotions at the holy sepulchre, sat by the fire-side in the great hall, and told the knight and his attendants, of the perils through which he had passed. The Mohammedan had cruelly insulted and oppressed him. At the hazard of his life he had performed his vow. Many had been his dangers, and his hair-breadth 'scapes. "Were the disciples of the Christian faith still to be subject to Mussulman contumely and ill treatment? Was the tomb of our blessed Lord to remain in the hands of infidel Turks? Was there no brave heart—no strong arm to espouse the cause of Christ, and of his pilgrims, and to deliver the Holy Land from its Moslem tyrants?" Such tales and sentiments were often heard around the blazing hearth at night-fall. The courage, the enterprise, the superstition of the knight were thus aroused, and he burned to redress the palmer's wrongs, and to rid the Holy Land from Turkish oppression. All his chivalrous ideas and feelings were awakened.

By the close of the eleventh century, these sentiments were widely diffused over Europe. Peter, the hermit, by his declamations on the wrongs endured by the Christians in Palestine,

and on the duty of the faithful to redress them, had greatly contributed to the prevalence of such sentiments. In the year 1095, a council was held at Clermont. Pope Urban urged a crusade against the infidels. It was decreed that Christendom should be summoned to the enterprise. "It is the will of God," was the cry which broke from the assembly—a cry which was soon echoed and re-echoed through Europe. The appeal was addressed to minds prepared for it. It was a spark falling on the train. Society was moved throughout, and young and old, rich and poor, knight and plebeian, became absorbed in the holy war.

Seven crusades were formed. In the first, religious enthusiasm was the predominating motive; in some of the succeeding ones, political considerations supplied the main impulse. The crusades form an era in European history. Their results on society, for good and evil, have been frequently described. On the one hand, they united the nations of Europe in one common cause, and prepared states, hitherto alienated from each other, for friendly combination and political alliance. They brought man into intercourse with his fellow man, and tended to break down prejudices between race and race. They contributed, in some degree, to overthrow the system of feudal tyranny, by emancipating the vassal, for a while, from the bondage of his lord; and by the division and sale of fiefs, to which the barons had recourse for the supply

of means to meet their enormous expenses in carrying on the war, they gave an impulse to commerce, and promoted the revival of art ; and by bringing multitudes to Rome, on their way to the Holy Land, gave an opportunity of inspecting the policy and the morals of the papal court. Thus they furnished much of that knowledge respecting its corruptions, and inspired much of that hardihood in attacking it, which appear in the European literature of the age. On the other hand, the crusades were productive of great social evils. They promoted immorality, in consequence of the dispensations and indulgences which were granted to those who took the cross ; and through the gathering together of such vagrant and disorderly masses of people of all ranks. They wasted millions of treasure and millions of lives, and entailed all sorts of sufferings, both on the Christian and the Mussulman. And they also cherished a spirit of fierce fanaticism and intolerance, through the promises which were made of rewards in heaven to the destroyer of infidels. But the evils of the crusades were temporary ; its advantages were permanent. " So many crimes and so much misery have seldom been accumulated in so short a space as in the three years of the first expedition ;" and throughout the whole duration of the enterprise, there was abundant sin and suffering ; but we may add that rarely has so much benefit accrued to posterity from wild and superstitious schemes, full of misery to

their projectors and supporters, as have resulted to the nations of Europe from the crusades.

But our present business is to look at the crusades in connexion with chivalry. The chivalrous feelings of the knight greatly contributed to produce the crusades. He felt for the pilgrim, as for one whose wrongs the laws of chivalry required him to redress ; and he looked upon the Holy Land, as the possession of Christ invaded by infidels, with somewhat of the same feelings as he would have looked on the domains of his feudal sovereign ravaged by enemies. In the spirit of knight errantry, he girded on his sword, assumed the broadly-marked cross on his breast or shoulder, and bidding adieu to his castle, went forth to the holy wars. The crusades reacted on chivalry, and fostered it ; indeed, during the term of their continuance, the institute acquired its full vigour and glory. They somewhat modified it, by infusing into it more of a religious spirit, such as it then was, and by connecting with it the religious rites which were so conspicuous among its forms and customs in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The crusades were also, perhaps, the chief cause of that spirit of intolerance and persecution which after their commencement strongly marked the knight in general, rendering him not only the avenger of the oppressed and the friend of the fair, but the implacable foe of such as differed from him in religious faith. Hence, from

the crusades against the Saracens, spring the crusades against the Albigenses. The Christian, if he differed from the Romish church, was put on a level with the infidel Turk; and the knight went forth to slay the citizens and villagers of Languedoc, in the same spirit in which he drew his sword against the turbaned soldiers and people of Palestine.

The crusaders took their name from the red cross embroidered on their dress. This was their well-known badge. In the first expedition, their shields bore no heraldic device, but the necessity of something to distinguish knight from knight, led to the adoption of coats of arms. These were richly emblazoned on their bucklers and banners, and on the trappings of their horses. We can easily picture the crusader, completely armed with his close helmet, hauberk,* hood, and chauses,† all of mail, and a surcoat of rich cloth embroidered with armorial bearings. Religious ceremonies, like those which were used at the consecration and embarking of pilgrims, were connected with the setting forth of the crusaders to the holy wars. Priests attended them; the host was carried on ship-board, and placed under a canopy; and the galleys, which conveyed the rich knights, were painted within and without with escutcheons.

The laws which were enacted by Richard Cœur de Lion, and Philip of France, for the

* Sort of tunic or coat.

† Leggings.

regulation of their followers on their way to the Holy Land, and while engaged in the wars, were very illustrative of that proud and exclusive spirit which we have noticed already, as entering into the soul of chivalry, while they show the great fondness for gambling, which was another trait of knightly character—"Know that every person in the army, excepting knights and clerks, is forbidden to play for money, at any game whatever, during the passage; but the clerks and knights may play as high as the loss of twenty sols a day." Serjeants-at-arms were to play if specially permitted; but it is added, "if serjeants-at-arms, workmen, or sailors, be found playing of their own private authority, the first shall be flogged once a day for three days, and the others shall be thrown into the sea three times from the mast head."* The conduct of Richard and Philip toward each other, furnish some additional illustrations of practical chivalry. These illustrious knights, notwithstanding they had sworn friendship upon the holy Gospels, hated each other most cordially, and mutually dealt out their calumnies and reproaches.† Philip accused Richard of attempting to poison him, and on that account relinquished the enterprise which he had sworn to complete; and, on his way home, sought from the pope a release from his oath of alliance with the king of England. The whole history of Richard's crusade, and the treatment which he received

* Thierry's Norman Conquest, 228.

† Ibid.

on his journey homeward, show how much of suspicion, falsehood, and treachery was displayed by some of the boasted heroes of chivalry. The cruelty of one of the most magnanimous of knights (such Richard is said to have been) is exemplified in his own statement to the abbot of Clairvaux: "As it became us, we have put to death two thousand five hundred of them;" referring to the garrison of Acre, whom he had taken prisoners, and of whom he caused the number just stated to be led out of the city and butchered in cold blood. We must pass over other illustrations of the working of the laws of chivalry, to notice those orders of knighthood which arose among the crusaders, and which exhibited an odd combination of the military and ecclesiastical characters.

The order of the Knights Templars was founded at Jerusalem, in the year 1119, by nine knights, under Hugo de Payens, as grand master. They devoted themselves to the office of securing the roads to Jerusalem from robbers, and of guarding the Christian pilgrim through the Holy Land. They formed a class of knights errant, pledged to the protection of the helpless. But with this chivalrous character, they associated the principles of monachism. They were monks as well as soldiers, taking vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience to their superior. They lived together as a fraternity, adopting certain monastic rules of discipline relative to fasting, prayer, and

general conduct, prescribed for them by St. Bernard, and resembling the rules of monastic orders, with such modifications as were required by their military vocation. Their peculiar dress consisted of a white mantle over their suit of armour, bearing a large red cross. This new kind of ecclesiastical knighthood became extremely popular. The order was replenished by candidates from all quarters. Referring to the accession of so many to the order he patronized, Bernard exclaims—"The isles heard, the people listened from far, and burst from east and west in a glorious torrent, and like a river making glad the city of God." But the story of the order of the Templars is like that of the monks. The vow of poverty paved the way to enormous wealth, and the houses of these soldiers of the cross soon vied in architectural splendour, rich treasures, and wide domains, with the most opulent of the religious orders. A monument of their magnificence still remains in the lately restored Temple church, in London. But its wide sweeping arches, painted roofs, and stained windows are but relics of a vast pile of architecture including all the appurtenances of a monastic establishment. It was surrounded by gardens which stretched down to the Thames, and on the banks of the river the Red Cross Knight often trained his horses. The pride, rapacity, and licentiousness of the Templars are undeniable; but the indignation we feel at the remembrance of their crimes is mingled with

other emotions at the recollection of their fate. The order was suppressed by Pope Clement V., to gratify Philip the Fair, king of France. The monarch, in seeking the suppression of the order, was, no doubt, far more anxious to obtain their property than to reform their morals, and brought the most infamous and unfounded accusations against the brotherhood. Their cruel persecutions were borne with heroic fortitude, and, as it often happens in this world, a false glory was thrown around an unworthy cause by the manner in which its supporters met their fate in the hour of their fall.

Another military religious order sprung up in Jerusalem resembling that of the Knights Templars. There were certain monastic brethren dwelling in the hospital of St. John at Jerusalem, who devoted themselves to the care and entertainment of pilgrims. These devotees catching the spirit of the times, determined to blend the chivalrous with the religious life, and therefore bound themselves to the performance of military duties in protecting the palmer on his journey, and fighting with the infidel. The year of the institution of this knightly order is uncertain: but in 1130, we find their military character recognised in a bull issued by Pope Innocent II.* They took the usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and wore as their sign—in peace, a black mantle—in war, a red one, both marked with a white cross. So long as they

* Giesler, ii. 308.

remained at Jerusalem, they were called **hospitallers**, from the place of their residence ; but they by degrees dropped their original practice of entertaining pilgrims, and tending the sick and wounded. The knight predominated over the monk : and the brethren of St. John became, in valour, wealth, and power, the rivals of their brethren of the Temple. Their story is remarkable and well-known. Expelled from the Holy Land by Saladin, they sought retreat in the island of Rhodes, A.D. 1308, where their religious and knightly character seemed merged in their daring exploits as a band of buccaneers. When the watchman on the beach gave signal of the approach of a strange ship, by kindling a fire, the swift feluccas were soon out at sea, and the pirates of St. John chased the hapless vessel. But these proceedings were arrested by the invasion of Rhodes by the Turks. The knights made a brave defence of the island against their old enemies, led on by Solyman the Magnificent : ranged under the banners of the nations to which they belonged, the Lily of France, the Eagle of Germany, and St. George of England, (for the knights of St. John were men of different lands,) they fought with lion-hearted courage ; but they were at length compelled to yield to the Saracen conqueror. Driven from Rhodes, they settled in Malta ; but the glory of their order had passed away. A solitary remembrance of this far-famed fraternity still remains in the old gateway of St. John's,

Clerkenwell, which formed one of the entrances to the house of the order which formerly stood there.*

There were other orders of knights, who blended the ecclesiastical and the chivalrous character. Such were the Teutonic knights, who were founded in 1190, and who wore as their distinguishing badge a white mantle with a black cross. Ashmole gives an account of many other orders, making in all forty-six : but we presume the reader has no wish for any further details on the subject.

SECTION IV.

THE ORDER OF THE GARTER.

THERE were several orders of military knights. Ashmole enumerates forty-five, commencing the list with the Knights of the Round Table ; but the Order of the Garter, this worthy old herald represents as far surpassing all others. Its origin and early history illustrate the spirit of chivalry in our own country during the fourteenth century. It was founded by Edward III., and the adoption of the garter as a badge, with its well-known motto, *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, has been a subject most keenly investigated by antiquarians. Amidst various speculations, and in the absence of positive evidence upon the point, we adopt the opinion

* An interesting account of the Orders of the Templars, and the Knights of St. John, is given in the "Pictorial London." Our authorities are, chiefly,—Hospinian de Monas; Dugdale's Monasticon, and Ashmole's Order of the Garter.

of Mr. Beltz, and other writers, "that the garter may have been intended as the emblem of the tie or union of warlike qualities to be employed in the assertion of the founder's claim to the French crown, and the motto as a retort of shame and defiance upon him who should think ill of the enterprise, or of them whom the king had chosen to be the instruments of its accomplishment. The taste of that age for allegorical conceits and devices, may reasonably warrant such a conclusion." At the feast of St. Hilary, in 1344, we catch the first glimpse of preparation for the order. "The king," observes Stowe, "caused to be called together a great many artificers to the castle of Windsor, and began to build a house, which was called the round table, the floor whereof, from the centre or middle point into the compass, was an hundred foot, and the whole diameter two hundred foot, and the circumference thereof six hundred foot three quarters." In a record of expenses relating to certain jousts and tournaments at Windsor, in 1347, we observe the earliest allusion to the order or its symbol. Garters with the motto of the order embroidered thereon, and robes as well as banners and couches ornamented with the same ensign, were then issued from the great wardrobe at the charge of the sovereign.* In 1349, the order attained its perfect development, and laws and ordinances were duly enacted. Their number and minute-

* Beltz, p. 2.

ness, their frivolous character, and their bearing upon the allegorical spirit of the whole institute, may be seen in the two folio volumes on the subject, edited by Austes, or in the comely tome relating to the same matter, compiled by Ashmole. The garter betokened unity among the members of the order. Its being bound on the leg, signified that the knight was not to run away from battle; the motto taught that he was to do nothing unseemly. The image of St. George was intended to keep before him the character of that saint as his example, (though, strange enough, no one can tell who this hero was, or whether there ever existed such a person at all.) The purple robe indicated majesty; the collar, in all cases of the same weight, and the same number of links, was a witness of the bond of faith, peace, and unity; and the name of knights' companions was, in connexion with the other parts of the institution, intended to show how they ought to be united in all chances of fortune, both in peace and war. The twenty-five knights, the original number of the order, pass before us on the pages of old Stowe, to their installation on the 23rd of April, 1349. "All these, together with the king, were clothed in gowns of russet, powdered, with garters blue, wearing the like garters also on the right leg, and mantles of blue with scutcheons of St. George. In this sort of apparel, they, being bareheaded, heard mass, which was celebrated by Simon Islip, archbishop of Canterbury, and the

bishops of Winchester and Exeter." The chronicler takes us to the chapel, and the banqueting hall, and there we see the knights orderly setting themselves at the table for the honour of the feast, which they named to be of St. George the Martyr, and the choosing of the Knights of the Garter. A tournament followed, remarkable for its great splendour, at which many nobles, and David, king of Scotland, then a prisoner in England, were present. Tournaments were the grand festivals of chivalry, on which occasions its form and spirit were fully displayed. These celebrations often took place in Windsor; but one, especially, held in 1356, is mentioned by historians as eclipsing all its predecessors in pomp and magnificence. As the scene embodies one characteristic of the age, we will place a sketch of it before the reader.

It is the 23rd of April; the sun is ascending the heavens; the breezes of spring are whispering among the trees of the forest, and eddying about the round tower. The little town that lies at the foot of the castle is a scene of stir and bustle. Knights with bands of retainers are crowding towards the castle gates. Matrons and damsels on their palfreys, attired like cavaliers, with daggers at their girdles, pass along the streets, attracting and returning the glances of the bright-helmed warriors. Others are on foot, with their white tippets streaming from their elbows, their gowns full and skirted, and worn over a kirtle in such a

manner as to give the appearance of a jacket to that portion which is visible. Their hood or cowl is twisted into fanciful shapes, and is secured to the hair by pins. Men of all ranks are thronging to the scene of action. Some are dressed in long coats down to their ancles, with hoods covering their heads, or thrown over their shoulders; while others are attired in a short coat, and wear hats. The fashionables are fantastically arrayed in coats buttoned down in front, and composed of the richest materials magnificently embroidered. They are girded with splendid girdles, and their shoes are conspicuous for their length and their pointed toes. We pass by the castle gate and drawbridge, and making our way, as well as the crowd will allow us, we arrive at the home park, under the eastern wall of the castle, where the lists for the tournament are prepared. The spot commands a fine view of the Thames on one side, and of the far-spreading Windsor Forest on the other. Approaching the lists, we see a temporary gallery hung with tapestry glittering with the royal arms, and crowded with high-born dames and beauties of the court. The majestic lady in the middle, beneath the golden canopy, so splendidly arrayed, on whose dress 500*l.*, according to the wardrobe account, has been expended, is Philippa, the wife of Edward, the heroine of Neville's Cross. Squires, pages, and yeomen, in rich liveries, are seen standing or moving in attendance about this royal spot. Other elevated seats are

prepared in different parts, where knights and nobles, and other distinguished persons, are filling up their places. From the turrets of the castle the faces of spectators are seen, looking down with curiosity on the spirit-stirring spectacle. The commonalty, in their holiday dresses, are availing themselves of the accommodation provided for them, and present a gay and animating picture. Heralds and pursuivants are running to and fro, their gorgeous coats sparkling in the sun. There, at each end of the lists, are the knights cased in plate armour, each with his favourite device emblazoned on his shield. The tournament is now to begin. Silence is obtained, and the herald reads the laws. The knights enter the arena. Yonder tall figure in full armour, with a white swan conspicuous on his shield, is the founder of the festival, King Edward III. Near him, clothed in sable armour, is the Black Prince. There, on a richly caparisoned horse, is John of France, and with him are several nobles of his court, who, though prisoners like himself, are allowed by the courtesy of chivalry to enter the lists. Regulating the paces of their horses with knightly dexterity, they move round the arena, and then, dividing into two parties, prepare for the conflict. Ranged against each, front to front, with their long lances upright, they await the signal for the encounter. It is given. The marshal pronounces the word. The trumpets sound. The combatants engage. The shock is tremendous

—the fallen knights and shivered lances attest its violence. The shouts of the people and the sounds of the clarion peal around the castle walls. Other competitors for glory enter the lists, and other conflicts follow. Now one displays his dexterity and prowess, and now another, by some want of skill, or some awkward mishap, is unhorsed and vanquished. The excitement continues, and the whole scene is one of life and feeling.

Let the reader think of this tournament when he visits Windsor Castle, and walks on the eastern terrace. Let him think on the busy stir which resounded there, ere those elms were planted, and when some of those oaks were acorns. Let him ask, where are the thousands who then formed the concourse, where their dust, where their spirits? And while he receives for answer—where the gay multitudes who often throng that terrace to gaze on their monarch and her court will be ere long—let him learn that the fashion of the world, like a gay tournament, like a glittering procession, passeth away.*

* This description of the tournament has appeared before, with some slight difference, in "Windsor in the Olden Times."

CHAPTER III.

COMMERCE.

“BUT the age of chivalry is gone,” exclaimed Mr. Burke; “that of sophists, economists, and calculators, has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.” We have no sympathy in the romantic feeling of that great man, when he uttered this exclamation. Commerce has contributed far more to the real civilization and happiness of Europe than chivalry. The one has a direct tendency to foster war—the greatest enemy; the other to foster peace—the best friend of man. Chivalry rejoices in the battle plain: there it gathers its laurels. Commerce, in the tranquil city: there it collects its treasures. The latter, inasmuch as its prosperity, if not its existence, is bound up with the preservation of order and justice, and the cultivation of reciprocal good-will, has a far more powerful tendency to promote these virtues, than the former has, with its code of honour and its laws of courtesy, unaccompanied as they are by any adequate sanctions. And in point of fact, the towns of Europe, where commerce flourished, during the latter part of the middle ages, were the scenes of far more

social virtue, than the castles and the field, where chivalry flourished in its palmy days. The system, over whose decline Mr. Burke so eloquently mourns, idly vaunted itself on noble sentiments, which were rarely, if ever, reduced to practice ; while that order of things, whose early progress we are to about to trace, though it made no high pretensions of that nature, did actually raise the moral character as well as the social condition of mankind.

SECTION I.

ITALIAN COMMERCE.

THOUGH chivalry and commerce are opposed to each other, the infancy of the latter was accidentally cherished by the former. The out-break of the religious military spirit of the crusades greatly contributed to the growth and vigour of European commerce. Venice had been previously distinguished by her mercantile pursuits and wealth. Pisa and Genoa were just rising into importance, when, in the twelfth century, the trade of all these cities received a strong impulse from the holy wars. Other countries spent their treasures on this fanatical expedition, and Italy reaped the profit. It was the chief place for embarkation. Numerous were the vessels required for the conveyance of the red-cross warriors to the field of their enterprise, and costly were the provisions for their outfit, all of which were supplied by the Italian merchants. If sympathy in the enthusiasm of the age led them

to contribute something out of their own resources to the expense of the expedition, certainly their mercantile prudence taught them how to refund the contribution with interest. In addition to the profit which they derived from fitting out so many ships, they secured for themselves great privileges in the principalities formed by the crusaders in Syria. There they had their *fundica* or factories,* with the liberty, exclusively granted to them, of trading with the eastern merchants. Perhaps Venice was more enriched by the crusades than any other city. Yet Genoa and Pisa were also aggrandized ; indeed, the holy wars mark the era of the brilliant commercial prosperity which crowned the latter. The noblest monuments of its wealth and taste, the well-known baptistry and leaning tower of Pisa, and the arcades which surround the Campo Santo, belong to the thirteenth century. The fall of Acre, and with it the extinction of the dominion of the crusaders in Syria, terminated the advantages which the Italian cities derived from them. Venice, however, indemnified herself against loss by the friendship she cultivated, and the consequent trade which she carried on with the Saracen conquerors.

Another circumstance which contributed to the improvement of trade in southern Europe, was the introduction into Sicily of the rearing of silk worms, and the weaving of silk, by Roger Guiscard, who, when he invaded Greece

[Du Cange in voce.

in 1146, brought home to Palermo certain captives, who taught the Sicilians these valuable arts. They were previously known and practised by the Saracens in Spain ; and about the same time as Guiscard's invasion of Greece, two Moorish cities were taken by the Genoese, who transported to their own country the manufactures of the vanquished. But a still greater impulse was given to Italian trade by the taking of Constantinople, in 1204. The Venetians largely shared in the enterprise, and in the advantages of the victory. The whole trade of the east, in fact, was at once transferred to them, and the Venetian flag kept sole possession of the Black Sea. The greatest commercial splendour of that proud state may be dated about that time. The marriage of the republic with the Adriatic gulf, celebrated by the well-known ceremony of casting the ducal ring into the waters, had now become more than a name ; and it was no idle boast, when the Venetian exclaimed—"That sea is ours!" At the very commencement of the thirteenth century, one hundred and ten large vessels, sixty of long construction, and sixty others, transports, each carrying, on the average, two hundred men, sailed from the lagunes, beside fifty warlike galleys. One of these ships, called the Nundo, was said to be the largest vessel that had ever sailed on the Adriatic, since the great triumphal ship of Claudius. The naval armaments of Venice, after the taking of Constantinople, were ever passing to and fro between

that great eastern emporium and the harbours of St. Mark, exporting the metals, productions, and manufactures of the west, and returning home richly laden with the silks and spices of Asia. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, Pisa declined in her mercantile affairs, and Venice and Genoa were left the rival mistresses of the commerce of the east. Fierce were the conflicts between these great republics, but they come not within our present sketch. Till the retaking of Constantinople by the Greeks in 1261, Venice outshone Genoa in her oriental trade ; but after that event, to which the Genoese lent their aid, the latter obtained a larger share. This powerful and enterprising state, sometimes the ally, sometimes the enemy, of the Byzantine court, maintained an independent settlement at Pera. From thence she spread her sails into the Euxine, and planting a colony at Caffa in the Crimea, extended a line of commerce with the interior regions of Asia, which even the skill and spirit of our own times have not been able to revive. Froissart describes Genoa, in his time, the fourteenth century, as the seat of commercial prosperity. "The Genoese," he remarks, "carry their commerce everywhere, by means of the duties they pay, even to the further India, and the realm of Prester John, (that is, Thibet.) They are universally well received on account of the gold, silver, and rich merchandise they bring from Alexandria, Cairo, Damascüs, or from the Saracens. It is thus the world is supplied, for

what is not in one country is in another: but all this is well known. The Genoese are the most adventurous navigators, and are much superior to the Venetians as lords of the sea, being more feared by the Saracens than any others, for they are excellent and determined seamen; and one Genoese galley would attack and probably conquer four galleys of the Saracens.”*

But Italian commerce spread her wings to the west as well as the east; and, in the fourteenth century, we find both Genoa and Venice trading with England and France. Genoa, however, surpassed her rival, beyond all question, in her traffic over the western seas. In an early year of that century, there were Genoese galleys laden with wool, cloth, and other merchandise, estimated at the value of sixty thousand and seventy thousand pounds. In 1380, a Genoese ship was wrecked on the shore of Somersetshire, containing a cargo of green ginger, cured with lemon juice, dried grapes or raisins, sulphur, bales of woad, writing paper, white sugar, empty boxes, dried prunes, rice, cinnamon, and Egyptian flax. A few years afterwards, some Genoese vessels were lost, which were bound for Flanders, with wines, stuffs of gold silk, gold, silver, and precious stones. The long voyages thus made by the Italians were the result of the discovery of the polarity of the magnet, and the application of the discovery to the invention of the mariner's

* Froissart Chron. vii. 226.

compass. Ships, which before cautiously coasted along the Mediterranean, could now boldly venture on the broad Atlantic. The discovery has generally been ascribed to a citizen of Amalfi, in the fourteenth century; but it has been satisfactorily shown, that explicit references are made to it by authors who wrote an hundred years earlier. Such extended commerce, carried on by sea, rendered maritime laws necessary for its preservation; and in the thirteenth century, they were formed into a written code, constituting the basis of international law, by which the mercantile states of the south of Europe professed to bind themselves; but which, for a long time, they very imperfectly observed.

While the foreign trade of Italy was on the advance, arrangements were made in her great commercial cities, in reference to her internal mercantile and monetary transactions, which anticipated the institutions of modern times. Banks for the deposit and lending of money had existed in Greece and Rome; such establishments were revived by private individuals, soon after the revival of commerce. They obtained their present name from the Italian word *banco* or bench, on which the money dealings were conducted. But the earliest public or national bank was that of Venice. It is referred to the year 1171.* The state had been obliged to borrow money of her opulent citizens. The loans were forced, and the in-

* Macpherson i. 341.

terest paid was four per cent.—a rate extremely low for those times. The public creditors were incorporated into a company, a national debt was permanently established, and stock in the Venetian funds was transferable in the books of the bank, after the same manner as in the bank of England. The bank of Genoa was established in 1407. Its origin was similar to that of the Venetian bank. Its management was entrusted to eight directors, chosen by the fundholders, and the establishment received the name of the Chamber of St. George. It appears to have had considerable political influence with the government, and it acquired, by an armament of its own, the possession of the island of Corsica. Money-lending by private merchants, at a high rate of interest, became a common trade after the revival of commerce, and was largely carried on by the Jews, who were the great private bankers of Europe. Negotiable bills of exchange, also, were employed to facilitate mercantile transactions.

With regard to the general trade of Venice in the fifteenth century, there are some interesting statistics supplied by Sanuto, a Venetian author of that period.* He states that the value of goods exported in one year, was ten millions of ducats, upon which the profits amounted to four millions, showing how large was the rate of profit obtained by these Italian merchants. Their houses were valued

at seven millions, which yielded an annual rental of five hundred thousand ducats. They had three thousand vessels carrying seventeen hundred seamen, and three hundred more ships with forty-five galleys, manned by nineteen thousand sailors. Sixteen thousand carpenters worked in their dockyards. Their mint coined annually a million ducats of gold, two hundred thousand pieces of silver, and eighty thousand solidi. Fifty thousand ducats were sent to Egypt and Syria in payment for their merchandise, and one hundred thousand to England. They paid weekly to the Florentines seven thousand ducats for Catalonian wool, crimson, and grain; silk, gold, and silver; thread, wax, sugar, and violins. From the Milanese dominion, they drew a million ducats in coin, and the value of nine hundred thousand more in cloth, on which they reckoned the profit at six hundred thousand ducats. These figures supply some definite conception of the extensive trade and abundant wealth of this modern Tyre, which far surpassed her ancient type, and give reality to the fairy pictures of her greatness, which gleam on us so brightly from the page of poetry.

“ Thus did Venice rise—
Thus flourish, till the unwelcome tidings came,
That in the Tagus had arrived a fleet
From India, from the region of the sun,
Fragrant with spices; that a way was found,
A channel opened, and the golden stream
Turned to enrich another.”*

* Rogers' Italy. The historian has corrected the poet as to the cause of the decline of Venice. “It is worthy of observation,” remarks Mr. Hallam, “that we are apt to fall into a

Commerce found a congenial home in another Italian city—Florence. In consequence of her inland position she had no maritime trade, till the fourteenth century, when, by purchasing the cities of Pisa and Leghorn, she obtained two ports in the Mediterranean. But her inland commerce had been great before, or funds would not have been at command for the purchase of those cities. The very basis of the Florentine policy was commercial, and her citizens were divided into companies, according to their trades. The seven greater companies had a council of their own, with a chief magistrate, who administered justice among the members; and a gonfaloniere or military officer, round whose banner they rallied in time of war.*

A merchant citizen of her own, in the fourteenth century, Giovanni Villani, has left a complete description of the Florence of his day. The revenue amounted to three hundred thousand florins. Two hundred establishments, with thirty thousand workmen, were employed in the manufacture of wool. The cloth produced annually, sold for twelve hundred thousand florins. There were eighty banks; and two of these advanced to our Edward III. a loan of three hundred thousand marks. The

vulgar error in supposing that Venice was crushed, or even materially affected, as a commercial city, by the discovery of the Portuguese. She was in fact more opulent, as her buildings of themselves may prove, in the sixteenth century than in any preceding age. The French trade from Marseilles to the Levant, which began later to flourish, was what impoverished Venice, rather than that of Portugal with the East Indies."—Introduction to Lit. iii. 363.

* Hallam; Middle Ages, c. iii. p. 2.

city and its vicinity contained one hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants. The wealth of her merchants, especially those of the house of Medici, was enormous. Cosmo lent so much money to Alfonso, king of Naples, that by calling in his debt, he so drained the monarch's resources, as to disable him for going to war with the republic.* "I think this family," says Comines, "was the greatest that ever was in the world, for its factors and agents had so much credit, on account of their name, that the effect I have seen of this, in Flanders and England, is scarce credible. I saw one Gerard Quanvесе, who kept king Edward iv. upon his throne, almost by himself, during the civil wars in England: he furnished the king, at different times, with more than six score thousand pounds, though not much to his master's advantage; however he got back his money after a while. There was another I saw, named Thomas Portunari, who was security between the said king Edward and Duke Charles of Burgundy for fifty thousand crowns; and at another time, for eighty thousand." In thirty-seven years, the mercantile firm of the Medici expended in works of public utility and charity six hundred and sixty thousand florins. On the death of Lorenzo, the brother of Cosmo, and the great-uncle of his namesake, the Magnificent, his proportion of the family wealth was upwards of two hundred and thirty-five thousand florins. The Florentines thoroughly learned the lesson that

* Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Med.* p. 32.

money makes money, and acquired much of their property by lending at high rates of interest. The manufactures of the city were also a source of great profit; and by the commencement of their trade with the Levant in 1421, another fountain of wealth was opened. The Medici, in addition to the command of all these methods for the employment of capital, had rich mines of alum in different parts of Italy.

Commerce proved itself the friend of agriculture. Italy assumed a different appearance after the revival of commerce, from what it had worn before. The prosperity of the merchant inspired and rewarded the industry of the farmer. The granaries of the city must be filled, and hence the husbandmen of Lombardy tilled their fields with new energy, and sent their rich harvests down the river Po. The Campagna of Florence became like a beautiful garden.

"The phases of the moon looked round below
On Arno's vale, where the dove-coloured steer
Was ploughing up and down among the vines."

Lorenzo de Medici had a villa near Florence, where the merchant and the statesman relieved his cares by the pursuits of husbandry. A letter written by a contemporary, gives us a sight of the farm—here is an extract. "Its situation is midway between Florence and Pistoja. Towards the north a spacious plain extends to the river, and is protected from the floods which sudden rains sometimes occasion, by immense embankments. From the facility with which it is watered in summer, it is so fertile

that three crops of hay are cut in each year ; but it is manured every other year, lest the soil should be exhausted. On an eminence above the middle of the farm are very extensive stables, the floors of which, for the sake of cleanliness, are laid with stone. These buildings are surrounded by high walls, and a deep moat, and have four towers like a castle. Here are kept a great number of most fertile and productive cows, which afford a quantity of cheese, equal to the supply of the city and vicinity of Florence, so that it is now no longer necessary to procure it, as formerly, from Lombardy. A brood of hogs fed with the whey, grow to a remarkable size. The villa abounds with quails, and other birds, particularly water fowl, so that the diversion of fowling is enjoyed here without fatigue. Lorenzo has also furnished the woods with pheasants and with peacocks, which he procured from Sicily. His orchards and gardens are most luxuriant, extending along the banks of the river. His plantation of mulberry trees is of such extent that we may hope ere long to have a diminution in the price of silk.”*

In connexion with the advance of trade and agriculture in Italy may be traced the progress of domestic civilization. The home life of the population generally presented scenes of greater comfort than before.

The emperor Frederick describes the Italians of the thirteenth century as having lived in

* Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Medici*, p. 239.

the previous century in a very humble way. Husband and wife ate out of the same dish. They had only one or two cups in the house. There were no candles, but the family was lighted by a torch held in the hand of a child or servant. The men wore caps of iron scales, and cloaks of leather or woollen cloth; the women, jackets of stuff, and gowns of linen. All this simplicity the author admires, and proceeds to speak in terms of lamentation respecting the change in his own day, when silks, and furs, and other luxuries, were beginning to spread as the result of revived commerce.* Mr. Hallam is of opinion, that in the fourteenth century the middle ranks of Italy were much more comfortable than those of France or England.† Throughout Europe, at that time, the state of commerce regulated the degree of domestic civilization. That in the train of commercial prosperity there often followed luxury, pride, and vice, is not to be denied; but it may be fairly questioned, whether the morals of the people in the most luxurious cities of Italy were at all worse in the fifteenth century than the morals of the people generally, before commerce revived.

SECTION II.

COMMERCE IN SPAIN—FRANCE—GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS.

BARCELONA, in Spain, felt, at an early period, the influence of the revival of commerce. In

* Macpherson's *Hist. of Commerce*, vol. i. p. 391.

† *State of Europe*, ch. ix. p. 2.

the thirteenth century she had her college of merchants, and the vessels which sailed for her port divided the commerce of the east with the fleets of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. Macpherson describes the Catalans as little inferior, in their flourishing trade, to the states of Italy ; and especially commends the liberality of their commercial policy, which seems to have been in advance of the spirit of the age.* After the fifteenth century, the commerce of this Spanish city declined. It is a remarkable fact, that there one of the most astonishing inventions of modern times, the steam ship, was anticipated so early as the year 1543. Blasco de Garay publicly exhibited his invention, and put to sea, in the presence of the emperor, the court, and a vast multitude of people who lined the shore, a vessel, which, being propelled by an agency now so familiar, but then so mysterious, seemed as if it swept along the waves by magic ; but the invention, which might have signalized Spain for ever, and at once benefited the world, was set aside through the ignorance or jealousy of the person who was commissioned by the court to examine it.

There were considerable woollen manufactures in France in the fourteenth century, and other signs of trade ; but the insecurity of property, owing to feudal rapacity, and the wars of the English, was most unfavourable to the interests of commerce. It could never thrive in a country where it was the boast of

* *Annals of Commerce*, vol. i. p. 627.

a Gascon knight, who had assisted the king of England in his wars—"We never failed meeting some rich merchants from Toulouse, Condom, La Reole, or Bergerac, whom we squeezed, which made us gay and debonair—but now," that the war was over, he adds, "all that is at an end." Adventurers of that description were very common all over Europe, and many a merchant as he travelled was waylaid and robbed, whence confederations for mutual protection became necessary, and in the voluntary association of the German merchants to defend themselves against robbers, we trace a rude and ineffectual attempt at something like a system of police.

Yet though France did not generally thrive in commerce, there must have been considerable wealth possessed by the citizens of Paris in the fourteenth century. Froissart describes, in his own minute and gossiping style, the entry of queen Isabella of France into Paris, on the 20th of June, 1399, and the description illustrates at once the riches of the city, and the manners of the citizens. They came forth to the amount of twelve hundred mounted on horseback, dressed in uniforms of green and crimson, and lined each side of the road. The whole street of St. Denis was covered with a canopy of rich camlet and silk cloths, and hung with tapestries representing various scenes and histories, to the delight of all beholders, especially Froissart himself, who, though used to displays of civic magnificence

on such occasions, declares that he was astonished whence such rich stuffs and ornaments could have come. All sorts of devices, pageants, mysteries, and exhibitions, according to the taste of the times, were prepared by the citizens, and in addition to all the expense thus incurred, they presented their sovereign and the queen with very costly gifts. A litter covered with a transparent veil of silk, and filled with pots, saucers, salts, cups, porringers, and dishes of gold, was presented to the king. Another, containing a model of a ship in gold, together with flagons, comfit boxes, and many other articles of the same metal, was presented to the queen. A third of a similar description was presented to the duchess of Touraine. "You may judge from all this," observes Froissart, "the riches and liberality of the Parisians."* In the next century there is further proof of the wealth in Paris. Macpherson mentions a merchant, Jacques Cœur, who employed three hundred factors to manage his vast concerns in different parts of the world, and lent two hundred thousand crowns to the king of France.†

But still, generally speaking, France was not a rich commercial country. For scenes of mercantile industry, enterprise, and wealth, we must look to Germany, and especially the Netherlands.

The cities of Hamburg and Bremen, in early

* Froissart's Chron. vol. ix. 352.

† Annals of Com, vol. i. 670.

times, took the lead in German commerce. In the thirteenth century they attained a respectable rank, but found that their advancing commerce was threatened by pirates at sea, and by robbers on land. Other cities, at the same time, rising into importance, fully sympathised with them in this respect: so that, in consequence, a very powerful and systematic confederacy was formed. It included eighty-five towns, divided into four companies, of which Lubec, Cologne, Brunswick, and Dantzic, were the chief. It was a far more comprehensive and elaborate system of mutual protection, than had been adopted before; and, while it aimed at accomplishing the purpose of a land and maritime police, to defend the merchant from pillage, it contemplated the higher design of promoting the general interests of commerce in the cities included within the league. They had their foreign factories or markets at London, Bruges, Novgorod, and Bergen, and their triennial conventions of deputies at Lubec, where they established their treasury and preserved their archives. According to the fashion of the age, which blended religious forms and usages with all associations, without breathing into them anything of a religious spirit, this Hanseatic League, as it was called, had in its factories a kind of monastic discipline binding the clerks to a life of celibacy.

Another confederation for the safety of commerce, was the League of the Rhine, formed

shortly after the former, but quite independent of it. It is referred to the year 1255. No one who has sailed down that noble river, and seen the frowning castles on their rocky heights, once the abode of bandit lords, who thence led forth their armed retainers, to attack the barges, laden with merchandize, or the beasts of burden winding slowly along the river bank, but must have felt, that there was abundant reason for such a confederacy. To its influence the ruin of those robber castles may be ascribed: an event hailed with no small joy by the commercial cities of the Rhine.

But of all the mercantile states of northern Europe in the middle ages, Flanders was at the head. The Flemish woollen manufacturers had attained such celebrity in the thirteenth century, that Matthew Paris declared all the world was clothed in English wool wrought by the Flemish weavers. Ghent and Bruges vied with each other in commercial energy and enterprise, but the latter surpassed her rival. In 1321, Bruges was fixed on by Robert, earl of Flanders, as the grand staple, or emporium for trade in his dominions. It soon became a mart for the commerce of the world. The Venetians and Genoese conveyed thither the treasures of the east, and there bartered them for the coarser, but more useful productions of the north. "The merchants of seventeen kingdoms had their factories and domiciles at Bruges, beside many from almost unknown

lands who flocked within its walls.”* While the merchant frequented the mart, the weaver was busy at his loom, in the production of silk and linen fabrics as well as woollen cloths. Still costlier manufactures than these were produced ; the tapestries of Bruges were the pride of Flanders, and in high repute throughout Europe ; and when, in later times, Henry iv. of France established the celebrated Gobelin manufactory, he selected one of the weavers of Bruges to superintend it. The prosperous commerce of the Flemish cities elevated them to wealth, power, and influence, so that the burgher, who in the twelfth century had been treated by the feudal lord as an inferior being, rose in the fourteenth to be his equal, nay, his superior. Numerous illustrations of the wealth of Bruges occur in the history of the period to which the present work is confined. The costly dresses of the wives of the citizens, when the queen of the French king, Philip the Fair, visited the Flemish metropolis, in the year 1301, excited in the royal breast feelings of astonishment, dashed with some mortification of her feudal pride—“ I thought myself the only queen here,” she exclaimed, “ but I see six hundred others, who appear more so than I.” The attire of the burghers was in keeping with that of their showy dames ; and a curious instance of their ostentation occurs in the account of a feast given by one of the counts of Flanders to the magistrates of

* Meyer *Annales Flandrici*, A.D. 1385.

his dominions. The princely merchants appeared in splendid velvet cloaks, which they folded into cushions and sat upon during the banquet, leaving them behind, to the no small surprise of the courtiers ; to whom the burgo-master of Bruges, when reminded of this act of supposed neglect, vauntingly replied, " We Flemings are not in the habit of carrying away the cushions after dinner." John Paston the younger, in one of his letters, dated Bruges, 8th of July, 1468, gives us a peep of the city in his day, and shows us how that emporium of commerce was the scene of pageantries, characteristic of the age. " As for tidings here, unless it be of the feast, I can none send you, saving that my lady Margaret (Plantagenet, sister of Edward iv.) was married on Sunday last past, at a town that is called the Dame, three miles out of Bruges, at five o'clock in the morning ; and she was brought the same day to Bruges to dinner, and there she was received as worshipfully as all the world could desire, as with procession with ladies and lords, best beseen of any people that ever I saw or heard of. Many pageants were played in her way to Bruges to her welcoming, the best I ever saw. And the same day, my lord the Bastard took upon him to answer twenty-four knights and gentlemen within eight days at justs of peace ; and when that they were answered, they twenty-four and himself should tourney with other twenty-five, the next day after, which is on Monday next coming ; and they that have

justed with him on this day, have been as richly beseen and himself also, as cloth of gold and silk and silver and goldsmith's work might make them ; for of such gear and gold and pearl and stones, they of the duke's court, neither gentlemen nor gentlewomen they want none. As for the duke's court, as of lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, I heard never of none like to it, save king Arthur's court. And I have no wit nor remembrance to write to you half the worship that is here."*

A more substantial proof of wealth is found in the case of a merchant of the same city, who supplied out of his own resources two hundred thousand ducats for the ransom of count John the Fearless. The commerce of Bruges went on thrivingly, maintaining the ascendant among the cities of the Netherlands, till, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was outstripped by the growing wealth and greatness of Antwerp.

Such was the progress made in commercial industry and wealth in the south and north of Europe during the thirteenth and two following centuries ; and no one can look into the history of that period without discerning evidence of the beneficial effects produced by the revival of trade and commerce. A new impulse was given to the peaceful arts of agriculture. The town improved the country, first, says Adam Smith, by affording a great

* Paston Letters, 2. 10.

and ready market for the rude produce of the land; and, secondly, by encouraging the purchase of estates, large parts of which were at the time uncultivated.* We have seen already that commerce proved the friend of agriculture in Italy.

The Netherlands, too, once covered with swamps and forests, became a rich agricultural country; farms and gardens surrounded the manufactory and the mart; and the wain richly laden with the treasures of merchandise, as it slowly traversed the roads of Brabant, passed through a rich country, "where the mower filled his hand, and he that bound sheaves his bosom." Other advantages, too, followed in the rear of commerce. It gradually introduced, says the author above quoted, order and good government, and with them the liberty and security of individuals, among the inhabitants of the country, who had before lived almost in a continual state of war with their neighbours, and of servile dependency on their superiors. Sometimes, indeed, jealousies sprung up between commercial cities, of which war was the result, as the history of Italy and the Netherlands too plainly shows; but still the tendency of mercantile pursuits was peaceful; the merchant felt that war was an evil, it was his interest to seek the termination of hostilities as quickly as possible; his influence sometimes prevented their outbreak, and when that was not the case, the

• Wealth of Nations, iii. 49.

spirit which commerce had awakened, tended in some measure to soften their feudal ferocity.* Commerce also proved herself the patron of literature, and the fine arts ; especially in Florence, where the Medici formed a library of classical authors, then emerging into remembrance after the oblivion of the dark ages ; where, too, they founded a museum of curiosities, enriched with the statues, coins, and medals of antiquity ; and where Lorenzo the Magnificent gathered round him in the circle of his choice friends, a Politian and a Pulci, and watched and fostered the opening genius of that extraordinary man, Michael Angelo, whose tomb was fitly decorated with the triple wreaths of painting, sculpture, and architecture.

SECTION III.

ENGLISH COMMERCE.

LONDON, in the twelfth century, was a place of considerable mercantile importance, and became at that period the capital of the kingdom. A contemporary annalist, William Fitzstephen, gives a glowing description of its commerce and wealth. He tells us, that its mart was stored with the gold and spices of Arabia, the precious stones of Egypt, the purple cloths of India, the oil of Bagdad, the furs of the north, the arms of Scythia, and the wines of France, and that its citizens displayed the signs of commercial opulence in their costly

* The History of Lorenzo de Medici affords examples.

dress, and richly furnished tables. The different trades had their distinct places in the city for selling their wares every day, and a weekly market was held in Smithfield for the sale of live stock. The vague description of the wealth of London given by Fitzstephen is unsatisfactory, and doubtless exaggerated ; nor are the numbers given of the inhabitants who bore arms, amounting, he says, to eighty thousand, at all to be depended on. Yet, allowing for some deduction from his estimate, we may conclude that our great metropolis at that time started in the career of commercial prosperity, which has long rendered it the first city of the world. Many other English cities are mentioned by the annalist of the day as important trading places. Fitzstephen enumerates the imports of London ; other authors allude to its exports ; these were iron, tin, and lead ; cargoes of meat and fish ; and above all, "the precious wool," as it is justly styled by Henry of Huntingdon. The nature of the exports, being raw material, shows that England, at that time, was not a great manufacturing country, though the large importation of woad for dyeing, at the latter part of the twelfth century, indicates that certain woollen goods, probably of a coarse kind, were made for home consumption. The settlement of the Flemish weavers in this country, in the reign of Edward III., imparted a grand stimulus to the industry and skill of our forefathers ; and may be reckoned as forming the era

of the commencement of our finer manufactures.

From the revival of commerce, throughout the period over which this work extends, the statute book of England abounds in proofs of the importance which our senators attached to the mercantile interests of the country—of the zeal with which they endeavoured to advance them, and of the egregious mistakes, the fruit of inexperience, which marked their commercial policy. It seems to be ordained by Providence, that a large portion of the practical wisdom of mankind is to arise from the study of the follies of their ancestors; and surely the present generation can find no lack of lessons in the commercial department of useful knowledge, if they look into the English statutes at large.

Many of these laws relate to commercial intercourse with other nations, in which every thing was done to favour the home merchant, at the expense of the foreign one. Edward I. enacted that foreigners should sell their goods within forty days after their arrival at an English port. They were not permitted permanently to reside in this country, except by special license, until the year 1303; and the license then given was accompanied by a number of restrictions, which must have proved most vexatious. The merchant from other countries was to sell only by wholesale, and to be answerable for the debts and offences of the rest of his resident countrymen. Afterwards

certain measures were appointed for foreign cloths, and such as did not correspond with the standard of the king's aulnager, were forfeited to the crown.* In the fifteenth century a law was passed prohibiting an Englishman from selling any articles to a foreigner, except for ready money; and certain foreign goods were altogether excluded. In connexion with all this, repeated prohibitions occur of the exportation of money and bullion—an enactment proceeding on the prejudice, which is not yet eradicated, that gold and silver, mere metal, constitute the wealth of a country. Regulations respecting the staple, or market for wool, which was confined to certain places, either in England or the continent, were very frequent and variable, especially in the fourteenth century, the general object of which regulations was to secure the payment of the duties on the export of wool: though their particular drift is not easily comprehended; since many of them, as Mr. Hallam remarks, tend to benefit foreign at the expense of English merchants. It is curious to observe how perfectly ineffectual were these laws. In spite of all the embargoes laid on the exportation of money, a commercial writer, of the fifteenth century,† complains that the foreigners “bear the gold out of this land, and suck the thrift out of our hand, as the wasp sucketh honey out of the bee.” And notwithstanding all the discouragement of foreigners, by one act of parliament after

* Stat. 8 Henry vi. c. 24.

† Libel of English Policy.

another, most dolorous is the complaint in the preamble to a statute of the first year of the reign of Richard III. respecting the "merchant strangers of the nation of Italy, who bring and convey from the parts beyond sea, great substance of wares and merchandises, unto fairs and markets, and all other places of the realm, at their pleasure; and there sell the same as well by retail as otherwise." In like manner we find the lawgivers, in the reign of Henry VI., (1429,) lamenting the failure of the regulations respecting the staple, which was then fixed at Calais. "A good substance of the merchandises," say they, "which ought to repair to the said staple, do repair into Flanders, Holland, Zealand, and Brabant, without custom or other charge; and, moreover, the same wools and merchandises be sold in the same parts at so low price, that the merchants aliens be so greatly enstored of the same, that they come not to Calais to buy their merchandises." Thus the streams of commerce, though dammed up by the floodgates of unwise legislation, still found a vent, as they ever strive to do, by virtue of their natural force and buoyancy.

The earliest account we have of the legal exports and imports of British trade, belongs to the year 1354. The former consisted of wool, woolfels, hides, pieces of cloth, and worsted stuff, amounting altogether, in value, to the sum of 212,338*l.* 5*s.*; on which customs were paid to the amount of 81,846*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.* The imports were fine cloth, wax, tuns of wine,

linen, mercery, and grocery, of the value of 38,383*l.* 16*s.* 10*d.* When we look, observes Macpherson, at the articles, and find that of raw materials for manufactures, which constitute so great a part of modern imports, there was not one single article imported; and that, on the other hand, the exports consisted almost entirely of the most valuable raw materials, and of the cloths in an unfinished state, which may therefore also be classified among raw materials, we must acknowledge, that it affords only a proof of the low state of manufactures and of commercial knowledge among a people who were obliged to allow foreigners to have the profit of manufacturing their own wool, and finishing their own cloths, and afterwards to repurchase both from them in the form of finished goods.* It was this state of things which gave rise to the proverb, that "the stranger buys of the Englishman the fox's skin for a groat, and sells him the tail for a shilling." As it regards the amount of the exports and imports mentioned in the exchequer account, they do not give a correct idea of the full extent of English commerce with foreigners at the time; because many articles which we know were then usually exported are not mentioned, such as tin, lead, and provisions; the omission of which no doubt arises from their not having been subject to duty. Besides, a considerable addition must be made on account of the extensive clandestine traffic carried on with

* Annals of Com. i. 554.

foreign merchants, in spite of legislative restrictions. Nothing is said of corn in the account referred to. It appears to have been sometimes exported, and at other times imported, but never without royal permission specially granted. In the fifteenth Henry VI., wheat was permitted to be sent out of the country, (but not to the king's enemies,) so long as the quarter of wheat did not exceed 6s. 8d. in value, or that of barley 3s. Judging from recorded exports, even as late as 1534, the commerce of England with other countries was far from great. They amounted to 900,000*l.* of present value; yet the balance of trade was greatly in our favour.

The laws touching inland commerce—the different branches of trade, and even professions, were all of the restrictive character. In the thirteenth century, the retail merchants of London were required to shut up their shops, which were only stalls or sheds, for fifteen days—the period appointed for the fair, which for that space of time monopolized all commercial traffic. In the next century, a law was passed to forbid any one purchasing goods and accumulating stock, with a view to the retail market; since the forestaller, as the wholesale merchant was called, was deemed an open oppressor of poor people. The price of articles of food was fixed by legislation; laws were also passed to regulate the wages of labourers; and it was resolved by parliament, that even the profits of those who sold pro-

visions should be under the control of the justices of the peace. Certain employments were confined to certain classes of society, and something like *caste* prevailed. The boy who laboured at the plough till he was twelve years of age, was doomed so to labour for life. And no man or woman was allowed to put son or daughter as apprentice to any craft, in any borough, who had not land to the value of twenty shillings. The punishment for such an offence was one year's imprisonment; and the cause assigned for the restriction, was the scarcity of agricultural labourers. This law, passed in the reign of Henry III., shows that at that time apprenticeships were becoming common, and that trade was on the increase. It may here be remarked, that the apprentices of London begin to appear in the fifteenth century as an important body of persons, deriving influence from their respectable family connexions, their masters' wealth, their own numbers, and the *esprit de corps*, which they zealously displayed. From an early period, they were distinguished by a peculiar garb; but they distinguished themselves still more by their love of fun and frolic. In Chaucer's day, they were a sight-seeing and merry race, and would leap out of their shops in Cheap, to run after the pageants and processions which often passed that way; a predilection which seemed to increase in after times. But a much more serious charge is brought against them, inasmuch as they sometimes created sad disturb-

ances. A very fatal riot in London, in 1517, on the first of May, called, from the circumstance, "Evil May Day," was commenced by a party of these lawless young gentlemen.

The number of lawyers was determined by legislative wisdom. It is remarked in the preamble to an act passed in 1455, that before there were so many attorneys, great tranquillity reigned, and there was little trouble and vexation; but now, it goes on to say, "They come to every market, fair, and other place, where there is any assembly of people, exhorting, procuring, moving, and inciting the people to attempt untrue and foreign suits, for small trespasses, little offences, and small sums of debt." It was enacted, that in the whole county of Norfolk there should be only six, and in Norwich only two.

The retail merchants and tradesmen of the fourteenth century were but a humble class, compared with such persons in the present day. The mercer dealt in toys, drugs, spices, and small wares generally. The shop which he occupied in Cheapside, was rented from eleven shillings to twenty-eight shillings a year. Haberdashers dealt in all kinds of articles; and many of the fraternity of small ware dealers carried on their business as pedlars, travelling from town to town and from fair to fair. In the year 1301, the whole movable property of Colchester was worth only five hundred and eighteen pounds; yet Colchester was then the tenth city of the

kingdom. Tailors made women's garments, and women followed the trade of brewers, bakers, and millers. When we get among the tradesmen and artizans of the fifteenth century, we find cordwainers use the mystery of tanners, and great complaints prevail of the leather being badly dressed. Tailors grumble because their masters will not pay them in money, but are pushing them off with pins, girdles, and other unprofitable wares. Hatters, who once gained a comfortable livelihood by making hats "by hand and feet," as they call it, now bitterly complain that their trade is ruined by machinery: for "bonnets and caps are fulled and thicked in fulling mills; and in the said mills, the said hats and caps be broken and deceitfully wrought, to the great damage of the king and his subjects." Sadly do the native manufacturers bewail the introduction of foreign goods. "They bring now daily into this realm, wrought silk, thrown bobbins and laces, falsely and deceitfully wrought;" whereupon, to gratify the people, parliament enacts that such commodities and wares, if found, shall be forfeited, half to the king and half to the informer. These particulars, in common with all the rest we have cited, show that our fathers were by no means skilled in the principles of political economy. They did not perceive the advantage of a division of labour, and abounded in idle prejudices against machinery and freedom in commerce; nor can we help observing, that even in our enlightened age, after all that has

been said by Adam Smith and his disciples, there are many to be found who are fondly clinging to the time-worn and now ragged prejudices of the merchants of the middle ages.

The history of commerce in England is connected very much with the history of guilds and fraternities of merchants. We find these in all the commercial towns of the period before us. In the larger ones, there was a sub-division of the manufacturing and trading community into distinct companies. In the metropolis, these were numerous and important, and make a very prominent figure in the history of that city. The general incorporation of the London guilds of merchants took place in the reign of Edward III., who watched over the interests of commerce with a laudable zeal. He granted them letters patent, confirmed or bestowed their privileges, and especially ennobled such communities by enrolling himself a member of the Merchant Tailors' company: a distinction now generally forgotten, when we think of the hero of Cressy. At the close of his reign, there were forty-eight companies who sent members to the common council. These guilds formed so many virtual castes, inasmuch as the members of one were not allowed to exercise the craft of another, and each carefully preserved its own secrets; whence the name of mystery, as applied to a particular trade. In this respect, an impassable gulf separated the mercer from the grocer, and the draper from the fishmonger; and however unsuccessful one

trade might prove, the individual apprenticed to it was by no means permitted to have recourse to another. The master and wardens of the companies took the oversight of the members, not only in reference to their trades, but in some degree in reference to their general conduct; taking cognizance of idleness and irregular behaviour, and making up personal quarrels. Over the apprentices, especially, they exercised control, punishing them for misbehaviour, sometimes by "spending two-penny worth of birchen rods" on a naughty urchin for "his unthrifty demeanour," and constantly interfering with the apprentices' dresses, the articles of which they minutely specified. Indeed, these regulations as to dress, were, in some instances, extended to the members in general. These companies were monopolies; but it appears that the lord mayor sometimes interfered to check the selfishness inherent in such societies, and to prevent their raising the price of articles above a fair value. The wealth of some of these companies before the close of our period became very great; and, at an early date, we find the sovereigns of England having recourse to their coffers for loans, a practice which reached its height in the reign of Elizabeth. It has been already intimated, that the guilds of Germany partook of a religious character. The English companies did so, but it would seem not to the same extent. They were dedicated to "the body of Christ," "the blessed virgin," and other saints. They had

their priest, went in procession to celebrate mass, and zealously prayed for the dead. In their appropriate liveries, with a large body of clerks and priests in surplices, and accompanied by the lord mayor and aldermen in their scarlet robes, and other civic dignities, these companies might be seen on election day sweeping along Cheapside. Having made their offerings at the altar, they returned to the hall, where a civic entertainment of a grand description awaited the fraternity. The tables were loaded with boars' heads and barons of beef, conger eels and sea hogs, with many "subtleties," and abundance of wine. The minstrel's song sounded through the lofty apartment, and the whole was concluded by the exhibition of a religious mystery, representing, perhaps, the history of Noah's flood.*

There is abundant evidence of an improvement in manufactures, trade, and commerce, in England, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Even the sumptuary laws, which were passed to regulate the dresses of the community in the fifteenth century, show the rising importance of the merchant. If he possessed 500*l.* he was to dress as a gentleman of 100*l.*; and if he possessed 1000*l.*, he might put on the costume of the gentry who could command only 200*l.* The laws indicated that commercial men were getting up in the world, and were aspiring to be on a level with the landed aristocracy, which the

* See Herbert's History of the Twelve Great Companies.

latter saw fit to discourage as by no means proper. But very substantial proofs of the rising wealth of English merchants are given by Mr. Hallam. "In 1363, Picard, who had been lord mayor some years before, entertained Edward III., and the Black Prince, the kings of France, Scotland, and Cyprus, with many of the nobility, at his own house in the Vintry, and presented them with handsome gifts. Philpot, another eminent citizen, in Richard II.'s time, when the trade of England was considerably annoyed by privateers, hired 1000 armed men and despatched them to sea, where they took fifteen Spanish vessels with their prizes. We find Richard obtaining a great deal from private merchants and trading towns. In 1379, he got 5000*l.* from London, 1000 marks from Bristol, and in proportion, from smaller places. In 1386, London gave 4000*l.* more, and 10,000 marks in 1397. The latter sum was obtained also for the coronation of Henry VI. Nor were the contributions of individuals contemptible, considering the high value of money. Hinde, a citizen of London, lent to Henry IV. two thousand pounds in 1407, and Whittington one-half that sum.* The merchants of the staple advanced four thousand pounds at the same time. Our commerce continued to be regularly and

* "Sixteen will be a proper multiple when we would bring the general value of money in this reign (Henry VI.) to our present standard."—Hallam.

rapidly progressive during the fifteenth century. The famous Canynges, of Bristol, under Henry vi. and Edward iv., had ships of nine hundred tons burden. The trade, and even the internal wealth of England reached so much higher a pitch in the reign of the last-mentioned king than at any former period, that we may perceive the wars of York and Lancaster to have produced no very serious effect on national prosperity. Some battles were, doubtless, sanguinary: but the loss of lives in battle is soon repaired by a flourishing nation, and the devastation occasioned by armies was both partial and transitory."

In commercial cities there was much more of luxury and splendour than in the country. But we must not form our ideas of the mode of living among prosperous citizens by what we read of the grand displays and noble entertainments which were sometimes given by corporate bodies, or even very wealthy individuals. Every reader must perceive that this would be like judging of the every-day life of a wealthy London citizen from the magnificent doings on lord mayor's day. Down to the close of the period before us the dwellings of the respectable citizens were plain, and what we should deem humble, and the furniture and domestic economy in general were of a corresponding character. When we descend to the houses of artizans, we find them miserable hovels. Speaking generally of the fifteenth century, Harrison

says, "There were very few chimneys even in capital towns; the fire was laid to the wall, and the smoke issued out at the roof or door or window. The houses were wattled and plastered over with clay, and all the furniture and utensils were of wood. The people slept on straw pallets, with a log of wood for a pillow." Cleanliness was by no means characteristic of the age; and, on the whole, we are led to form a very poor idea of the domestic state of the lower classes in the commercial cities of England, even at the close of the fifteenth century. Still it would appear from the sumptuary laws, which permitted them to wear better clothes than they had formerly worn, that there was an improvement in their condition compared with earlier times.

From the commerce of our country we turn to look, for a moment, at its agriculture. It was in a low condition at the time of the Conquest, but a gradual improvement is traceable afterwards. It rose with commerce; but as commercial enterprise, diligence, and wealth, in England, were not so great as in Italy or the Netherlands, husbandry in those states was far in advance of husbandry in our country. Waste lands were, by degrees, brought into cultivation, till in the reign of Edward III., it is concluded from manorial surveys, and other documents, that in some places as much ground was farmed as at the present day. The condition of one county

in this respect differed greatly from another. All the extant rolls show that arable land bore a very large proportion to pasture land, in enclosed farms. This fact might lead at first sight to the supposition that corn must have been more plentiful and cheaper than cattle: but the reverse of this is well known to be the fact. The price of corn fluctuated very much; but the price of meat, in proportion to the average price of corn, was always very low. In the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I. the ordinary price of a quarter of corn was about four shillings, of an ox twelve shillings, of a sheep one. A comparison of these values shows that meat was cheaper and corn dearer, in proportion to each other, than at present. The higher price of corn than meat, notwithstanding the large quantity of ground in farms, under arable culture, is accounted for easily. There was a vast extent of *common* pasture throughout England, where cattle were fed; the tillage of fields was very imperfect, producing extremely scanty crops; the implements of husbandry were rude; oxen were so badly fed that it required six of them to draw a plough, which barely turned up half an acre in a summer's day, and these oxen consumed in the winter all the straw of the farm, so that little was left for manure. Besides, no doubt, the unsettled state of the times, domestic wars, and the insecure state of property, often for a while threw the land out of cultivation. There was every thing to

discourage the farmer from employing his capital in the improvement of his farm. As there was so little enclosed meadow land, as the cultivation of artificial grasses and turnips was unknown, winter provender for cattle was very scarce; hence many were killed before they were fat, and a store of salted meat was laid up for the winter. Pigs abounded in the country, roaming about the old forests, and feeding on acorns; these too were slain and salted for winter consumption; so that salted meat was a plentiful article of food. But vegetables were very scarce. The roots that now smoke on our table, cabbages, carrots, and potatoes, were unknown in England. Nor did the labouring classes eat wheaten bread so commonly as loaves made of rye, barley, and peas. This was very unhealthy diet, and, perhaps, to this circumstance in some measure may be attributed the prevalence of disease, and the shorter average duration of human life during the middle ages.

Mr. Hallam remarks that sixpence an acre was an average rent for arable land in the thirteenth century. Whether this rate was augmented before the time of Henry VIII. he does not determine. No doubt rents and the value of land varied much throughout the period before us. From one of the Paston Letters, dated September, 1451, we find land letting at fourpence per acre. Some short

time after, we observe a fall in the rent of a farm from sixty-six shillings and eightpence to forty-six shillings and eightpence. In 1450, Sir John Fastolf buys land at fourteen years' purchase; yet twenty years later, land appears to have been taken at ten years' purchase.*

Farms were taken on lease, and were much under-let at the end of the fifteenth century. Good old Latimer, in one of his sermons, describes his father's farm; and with this illustration of English agricultural life we conclude the chapter. "My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own, only he had a farm of three or four pound by year at the uttermost, and thereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep: and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able and did find the king a harness with himself and his horse, while he came to the place where he should receive the king's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went unto Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to preach before the king's majesty now. He married my sisters, with five pound or twenty nobles apiece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the

* Paston Letters, vol. i. pp. 24, 32, 36.

poor. And all this he did of the said farm, where he that now hath it payeth sixteen pound by year or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor.”*

* Latimer's Sermons, Parker Society, p. 101.

CHAPTER IV.

GOVERNMENT.

SECTION I.

REPUBLICS.

WE turn to those of Italy. We traced their rise in a former volume. Their independence was established as early as the twelfth century, but their career, though brilliant and vigorous, was turbulent and short. The sun of Italian liberty was often encircled by tempestuous clouds, and it "went down while it was yet day." Before the close of the period to which this work relates, the liberties of all these republics had perished: some long before. Yet, no doubt, the remembrance and influence of their struggles animated other nations, and ministered to the establishment of their freedom.

The republic of Venice had numbered seven centuries, at the time when our review begins. Her early democratic government had long passed away. The doge, elected by the people, had, with almost despotic power, ruled the destinies of the republic for nearly five hundred years, when, in 1172, Venice resolved upon a representative council, composed of

four hundred and eighty citizens, to be annually chosen. These councillors were nominated by twelve tribunes, elected by the people. At the same time a "senior council" was established, consisting of six members, who, in connexion with the doge, were to originate laws and ordinances to be submitted to the great council for their approval. The right of electing the doge was also vested in the latter. This new constitution provided against the tyranny of the chief magistrate, but it created a new power, which soon overthrew the liberties of Venice. The grand council withdrew from the people their elective rights, and, by gradual changes, between the years 1297 and 1319, constituted themselves an hereditary body, whose names were enrolled in the famous Golden Book. As early as 1179, a council of forty had been instituted for the administration of criminal justice; but in 1311* there was appointed the *Council of Ten*, that frightful inquisitorial tribunal, with its wide-spread apparatus of espionage—

Moving throughout, subtle, invisible,
And universal, as the air they breathed,
A power that never slumbered, nor forgave;
All eye, all ear, nowhere and everywhere.

The people were encouraged in the pursuits of commerce and pleasure; the government observed economy in the administration of finances, and was, in some respects, indulgent to its subjects; but every particle of political power was withdrawn from their possession,

* Sismondi says 1311; Hallam, 1310.

It was a capital crime for a man to question the wisdom of his rulers.

A word, a thought against the laws of Venice,
And in that hour he vanished from the earth.

The council of ten had a power higher than the nobles, higher than the doge, higher than the law. With it all liberty perished.

Genoa, whose history is associated with that of Venice, had, in the twelfth century, its consuls, varying in number from four to six, annually elected; but, in the next age, the republic, according to a fashion of the times, which had originated in Lombardy, chose its *podesta*. This officer was a nobleman of some neighbouring state, elected to administer both civil and military affairs: an arrangement which obviously arose from the extreme jealousy which the citizens of the same republic cherished in reference to each other. Hence the *podesta* was forbidden to link himself by the ties of marriage, or even the intimacies of friendship, with any families in the city which had elected him as its chief. The *podesta* of Genoa had a council of eight, chosen by the eight companies of nobility. "It gave not only an aristocratic, but almost an oligarchical character to the constitution, since many of the nobility were not members of those eight societies. Of the senate or councils we hardly know more than their existence; they are very little mentioned by historians. Every thing of a general nature, every thing that required the expression of public will, was reserved for

the entire and unrepresented sovereignty of the people. In no city was the parliament so often convened for war, for peace, for alliance, for change of government." Here then we have an oligarchy and a democracy blended; most uncongenial elements—out of the mingling of which jealousies, factions, and conflicts arose in Genoa. When these had prevailed for about a century, the Genoese, in 1339, sought tranquillity by a change of government. Venice, tired of the despotism of a doge, placed itself under the shadow of a powerful aristocracy. Genoa, tired of an aristocracy, elected a doge; but not a despotic one. His authority was limited by democratic influence; and by the two powers which now ruled the state, the aristocracy, as a body, was subdued. Yet individuals among them, distinguished by talents and patriotism, were appointed to offices of trust, in the civil and naval departments. But the revolution of 1339 did not secure peace to Genoa. For two centuries the city was the scene of frequent tumults, for a plebeian oligarchy now arose upon the ruins of the patrician, and faction and strife were the result. Both Milan and France took advantage of this state of things, and, at times, placed their garrisons in the city; but Genoa recovered her independence, under Andrea Doria, who established a new constitution, which provided for the election of a new doge every second year, and created a council of state for his assistance. This

council was chosen from an enrolled, but not, like the Venetian, an exclusive aristocracy, since new families, who possessed certain qualifications, might be added to its number.

From Genoa we return to the republics of Lombardy. In the twelfth century they were governed by consuls—varying in number from two to twenty. They had their general councils, or senates, more or less democratical in their constitution, and, beside this, their council of trust, which formed a state ministry to deliberate in secret. On particular occasions the great bell convoked the citizens to deliberate and decide on questions submitted to them by the council. At the close of the twelfth century we find the office of podesta established; yet still the consuls remained, divided and distinguished as consuls of the militia, consuls of justice, and consuls of trade. But whatever might be the constitution of the republican cities of Lombardy, there were elements at work in all of them, fatal to their peace. Not only were they agitated by the grand strife between the two well-known parties of the Guelphs and Ghibelins, but, in the bosom of the cities themselves, there existed mutual animosities between the aristocratic and plebeian classes. The pride of feudalism lingered among the nobles, who had taken up their abode in the free cities; and on the other hand the pride of wealth was quickened in the breasts of men who had grown rich by commerce. The strife naturally incident to such

a position, and oft repeated since in other forms and in other lands, arose and troubled the whole of Lombardy. The rupture in Milan, chief of the Lombardic cities, has been minutely described by Sismondi. Four credenze or companies were formed—two of them popular—composed respectively of the wealthy merchants and humble artizans, and two of them aristocratic, consisting of the higher and the inferior nobility. The latter sought to oppress, the former would not brook oppression. Then came “the tug of war.” The nobles entrenched themselves in the castellated mansions, which they had built in the streets of Milan; or swept the district with their cavalry, and laid it waste: and the people retaliated on the nobles, by furiously attacking their strongholds, and in some instances leveling them with the dust. The popular party seeing that the podesta sided with the aristocracy, chose a magistrate of their own—the nobles did the same. Milan was now virtually split into two republics. But, in 1259, the people prevailed, and exiled the nobles. Martin della Torre, the magistrate or podesta chosen by the people, became lord of the city; a sort of hereditary right to the government was established in his family, and three of the Torriani succeeded him. Other towns sought their protection; and they became lords of Lodi, Novara, Como, Vercelli, and Bergamo, as well as Milan. But the sway of the Torriani lasted only till 1277, when the

Visconti, one of the noble families who had been exiled from the city, overthrew the power of their rivals, and afterwards permanently established their power as the hereditary dukes of Milan. All independence was gone, and the love of liberty ceased, though the mockery of republican forms remained. On the extinction of the line of the Visconti, in 1458, the liberty of Milan was revived—but only for a moment; the rekindled torch was quenched by the treachery of Francesco Sporza.

The Tuscan cities became independent of the empire in the twelfth century. Florence stood at the head of these. The infant republic was ruled by nobles, but in 1266, the popular party prevailed, and established a thoroughly democratic constitution. The basis of it was found in the commercial companies of the city. Beside the consuls at the head of these companies, Florence, like other Italian cities, had its podesta, to whom was added a captain of the people with concurrent jurisdiction. Passing over other changes in the constitutional history of this remarkable republic, which, on account of their number and minuteness, it would be utterly impossible to notice in a sketch like this, we may observe that, in 1282, the supreme magistracy was vested in an order of six priors chosen every two months. But these officers being found insufficient to secure obedience to the laws, a supreme magistrate was appointed in 1295, called the Gonfalonier of Justice, who was placed at the head of a large

militia or police, and empowered to enforce the sentences of the podesta and captain of the people. In connexion with this arrangement, which was mainly intended to bring the nobles into a state of subjection to the laws, it was enacted that when any of that order were accused of crimes, common report, attested by two credible witnesses, was sufficient for their conviction. About the same time, also, the whole class of patricians were excluded from the office of priors. But it was not till 1324 that the democratic spirit reached its height, when it was determined that the citizens possessing certain qualifications should be admitted by rotation to the magistracy of the republic. Revolutions followed. Florence groaned under the tyranny of the duke of Athens—was rent in pieces by popular tumults—then yielded once more to aristocratic ascendancy. To remedy existing evils, the popular party, in 1393, procured the *Balia*, which was a temporary delegation of a sort of dictatorship to a certain number of citizens who were authorised to suspend the provision of 1324, to name the magistrates, and to banish suspected characters. In 1411, an aristocratic spirit revived, and a council of two hundred was formed of those only who had filled the higher offices within the previous thirty years; by whom every proposition was to be considered before it was brought under the consideration of the legislative council. In 1455, however, the democratic mode of drawing the magistrates by rotation

was resumed for a little while; but under Lorenzo de Medici, the free constitution of Florence was subverted, and the way was paved for the establishment of the dukedom under Cosmo I. This extremely imperfect notice is sufficient to show that the history of Florence, like that of the other Italian states, is the record of a struggle between the two great elements of modern society—the aristocracy and the people. The latter prevailed for a long period in Florence, and it must be confessed that their ascendancy was connected with a mournful series of tumults, disorders, and acts of injustice; yet even the stormy atmosphere of Florence was to be preferred to the cruel and iron-handed rule of the duke of Milan, and even to the mental slavery and death-like torpor of soul which prevailed in Venice.

Traces of republican forms, sometimes animated by their ancient spirit, are found in Rome during the twelfth and three following centuries. The civil authority of the pontiff over the city was not relished—was often resisted. Arnold of Brescia, and Rienzi, the last of the tribunes, sought to revive the old republic, but in vain. The final struggle was made by Pocari, in the reign of Nicholas V., but failed. That distinguished pontiff firmly established the civic power of the papacy in Rome, and organized the system of municipal administration, which has continued ever since.

The republics of Italy were independent of each other, their constitutions were variously

modified ; but there is a remarkable unity in the tenor of their history. For the most part, their conflicts were the same—one prolonged battle for supremacy, between the noble and the plebeian. Their defects the same : no adequate guarantee for personal security, no just appreciation of the value of human life, no wise provision for the progressive development of society, no fair system of representation, no clear distinction between the legislative and executive powers, no high-toned morality, no Christian justice and benevolence. And their issue was generally the same ; the principle of monarchy triumphed over aristocracies, oligarchies, and the fierce democracies. “The republics fell in the fifteenth century ; or where the name still lingered, power was concentrated in the hands of one or a few families. The republican life was burnt to the socket. The majority of the republics, great and small, gave place to sovereign houses.”* The dukes of Milan and Florence were monarchs in reality. Sismondi says we are indebted to the example of the Italian republics for modern liberty. Whether this be the case or not, assuredly we are indebted to their failure for some most valuable lessons respecting those abuses of liberty, against which it becomes us to guard ; and those securities for liberty, which we ought strenuously to maintain. Nor can we fail to discern in the history of these states an illustration of Aristotle’s maxim, that

* Guizot.

to push any principle of government to the extreme is to imperil it, and that the supporters of oligarchical and democratical constitutions destroy their respective objects by the immoderate and unwise zeal with which they pursue them.

The story of the rise and progress of the Swiss confederation for the breaking of Austria's oppressive yoke, and for the maintenance of their republican liberties, is one of the most exciting in the world. The scene on the banks of the lake of Uri on Martinmas eve, 1307 :—the confederates from Schwitz, Uri, Underwald, thirty-three in number, counselling together all night; then as the sun gilded the mountain tops, lifting up their right hands to heaven, and swearing by Him that liveth for ever, to withstand the fury of the oppressor;—the heroism of William Tell; his refusal to bow before the tyrant's hat; his son, the apple on his head; the well-aimed arrow; the lake scene between himself and Gessler;—the battle of Morgarten, the Marathon of Switzerland;—the fight at Sempach, and Winklereed's burying the lances of the foe in his own bosom to open a passage for his soldiers,—these are stories, touched with sublimity, which have interested us from our childhood; nor can we refrain from doing honour to all that was noble and generous in these men, though we regard war with the deepest horror, and condemn with unsparing severity, the evil passions which rage in the warrior's breast.

The Swiss confederacy was a league originally formed by the forest cantons, just enumerated, a triple band of republican states, to which were subsequently added Lucerne, Zurich, Glaris, Zug, and Bergne. These were the eight portions of the old Helvetic system; enlarged, at a later period, by the accession of five other cantons, Friburg, Soleure, Basle, Scaffhausen, and Appenzel. The cities included in the confederacy were free municipalities, with the full power of self-government, having their town council for the administration of affairs, and exhibiting in their history some conflicts between aristocratic and popular parties, though not so many, so fierce, and so fatal as those which disturbed the republican states of Italy.

“No great legislator,” says Mr. Smyth, “ever appeared in Switzerland. The speculatist will find no particular symmetry and grace in their systems, and may learn not to be exclusive in his theories. Times and circumstances taught their own lessons. Civil and religious establishments were imperfectly produced, roughly moulded, and slowly improved; and whatever might be their other merits, they were perfectly adequate to dispense the blessings of government and religion to a brave and artless people. The great difficulty with the inhabitants of Switzerland was, at all times, no doubt, to judge how far they were to mix, on the principles of their own security, with the politics of their neighbours. A second difficulty, to keep the states of their confederacy

from the influence of foreign intrigue and private jealousy. A third, to make local and particular rights of property and prescription conform to the interests of the whole. And finally, to preserve themselves simple and virtuous. In a word, publicly and privately, 'to do justice and love mercy;' and again, 'to keep themselves unspotted from the world.' This was indeed a task, which perfectly to execute was beyond the compass of human virtue. But with all their frailties and mistakes, their faults and follies, they existed for nearly five hundred years, in a state of great comparative independence and honour, security and happiness; and they only perished amid the ruthless and unprincipled invasions of revolutionary France, and the general ruin of Europe." This sketch of the constitution and character of the Swiss republics is beautifully drawn, but the colours are too brilliant. The system of raising mercenary troops to fight the battles of other countries, without respect to the cause in which they were engaged, and therefore sometimes on the side of tyranny, always strikes us as being a very foul blot on the character of the Swiss, utterly at variance with honour, principle, and a true love of the cause of freedom. The above-quoted author, indeed, notices it as a "disagreeable characteristic of the people of Switzerland." We feel compelled to use much stronger language. Nor can we forget that, at the close of the fifteenth century, the Swiss were very far from

keeping themselves unspotted from the world. Many of them were at that time much demoralised. The baths of Baden, the favourite places of resort for pleasure, were scenes of great licentiousness. No doubt there was a difference between the early and later character of this remarkable people. At the commencement of their confederated career, they evinced a virtue and a simplicity which were subsequently much shaded; though it ought to be added, that perhaps after all, the state of public and private morals in Switzerland, at the close of the period before us, would bear a favourable comparison with most other European states.

SECTION II.

MONARCHIES.

GERMANY was a feudal empire with an elective head. The princes of the different nations of which that great country was composed, were so many vassals, owing homage and service to the emperor, as their royal suzerain. In the eleventh century, the power, imperial jurisdiction, and revenue, were very great, especially under Henry III. who swayed an almost absolute sceptre. But after his time, a change took place, the constitution was altered, the princes and states came under the influence of the new spirit that was breathing over Europe, so fatal to feudal ser-

vitute ; and before the close of the period included in these sketches, the real power of the emperors of Germany dwindled into insignificance.

Originally the empire at large elected its sovereign : it was afterwards found convenient for some of the leading princes first to make an election, and then to submit their own choice to the other chief men, and to the people. This power, by degrees, as was natural, fell into few hands, the right of election was engrossed by an oligarchy, and the people and inferior nobles were deprived of the franchise. By the famous Golden Bull of Charles IV., A.D. 1355, the electoral college was finally determined to consist of seven members : the duke of Saxony, the count palatine of the Rhine, the king of Bohemia, the marquis of Brandenburg, and the archbishops of Mentz, Treves, and Cologne. The power of these seven electors was increased by other privileges, conceded to them in this instrument, which, in short, rendered them perfect monarchs within their respective territories. For some time before, the princes and inferior nobility, though deprived of their electoral suffrage, had been rising in influence, and becoming more and more independent of the imperial authority, so that in the fourteenth century, the ancient throne of Germany became completely overshadowed by the principalities and powers that surrounded it. The free cities too arose and became independent

of the empire, thus diminishing still further the splendour of the crown. From the beginning Germany had its diets, or grand assemblies of the princes and states; these assemblies, at this time, appear in three distinct colleges, composed of the three orders, *electors, princes, and free cities*. The diets had been, originally, assemblages of feudal vassals; they were now assemblies of the representatives of free states, debating and deciding with legislative power on the affairs of the whole Germanic body. The administration of justice, personally or by representation, was one of the ancient prerogatives of the emperor; but of this he was now shorn by the institution of what was called the imperial chamber, which was a tribunal of appeal in which judges presided, to whose appointment the consent of the diet was needful.

During the period before us, the electors and princes, who were real sovereigns—the inferior nobles—and the free cities, appear as the three virtual estates of the empire, the emperor himself being reduced to a mere shadow. The form and spirit of the Germanic constitution were out of harmony. The feudal institutions and usages remained; the count palatine of the Rhine, as the emperor's arch-steward, still served his table on state occasions. The king of Bohemia, as cupbearer, poured out his wine; the margrave of Brandenburg, as arch-chamberlain, brought him the golden bason and ewer to wash his hands;

and the duke of Saxony, as earl marshal, carried his sword: but these were empty forms of the class ever prevalent in public and private life; "compliments paid by which no one is flattered, trouble taken by which no one is benefited, and artifices practised by which no one is deceived." Thus while Germany retained symbols of feudal state and grandeur, it was really a free confederacy of states, a cluster of kingdoms and republics, connected chiefly by their meeting in the diet. The imperial sovereignty was, in fact, extinguished, and two distinct political principles were developing themselves in German society; the republican principle in the free cities; and the monarchical one, but limited in its working, in the other and ancient states.

In France we discover the opposite of what happened in Germany. In the tenth century, says Hallam, "the kingdom was as a great fief, or rather bundle of fiefs, and the king little more than one of a number of feudal nobles, differing rather in dignity than in power, from some of the rest. The royal council was composed only of barons or tenants in chief, prelates and household officers: political functions were not in that age so clearly separated as we are taught to fancy they should be. This council advised the king in matters of government, conformed and consented to his grants, and judged in all civil and criminal cases, where any peers of their court were concerned. The great

vassals of the crown acted for themselves in their own territories, with the assistance of councils, similar to that of the king." At the time when Germany was unbroken under an effectual, though not absolute control of its sovereign, France, as the same author observes, had lost all her political unity, the kings all their authority. At the commencement of our period, while the emperor of Germany was strong, the king of France was weak; at the close of this period matters were reversed,—the former retained only the shadow of authority, the latter was an absolute sovereign. Both these feudal monarchies lost their original character, but in different ways. The French sovereign had a privilege, which, by the German constitution, was denied the emperor—that of attaching fiefs to his own domain. The immediate territory of the French king was at one time smaller than that of some of his barons : but by degrees through forfeiture, bequests, purchases, marriage, and succession, the great fiefs of the kingdom were united to the domain of the monarch. He acquired them as his own property, and his jurisdiction over them, as feudal king, took the place of the feudal jurisdiction to which they had been previously subject. Before this increase of regal power, remaining feudal chieftains gradually melted away, and vanished. Thus while in Germany the feudal empire was *resolved* into a number of independent states, in France the feudal states were *absorbed* into

the royal dominion. The feudal spirit, however, long remained in the latter country.

Legislative and judicial power centered in the French crown. The parliament of Paris, liable from its name to be regarded as a legislative council, was a royal judicial tribunal, claiming absolute authority and unlimited obedience. But one important prerogative was lacking among the attributes of the French monarchy. In the palmy days of feudalism, the barons had claimed for themselves and their dependents, and had enjoyed it too, freedom from taxation. The king's resources, therefore, were limited to his own domains; and though they had now become extensive, and included many rising cities, they did not yield a revenue sufficient to meet his necessities. This led to the important measure of convoking the states-general, including the representatives of towns, as well as the clergy and nobility. It was a principle acknowledged, even in the middle ages, that the power of levying taxes belonged of right to the persons who were to pay them. The states-general were summoned, therefore, to supply the king's necessities: when they met, they seized the opportunity afforded, for seeking the redress of their grievances. Hence, in the year 1355, arose a memorable conflict between the sovereign and the nation. It was a most important era in French history, well deserving the attention of the historical student. Some have compared it to the struggle between king John of

England and the barons. If the conflict was similar, the result was far different. The promise which seemed to shine upon France, of having a free constitution, soon passed away. The monarch, jealous of his power, dismissed the states-general, and sought to supply his necessities by debasing the coin. His successors boldly assumed the power of taxation, and the people of France at length submitted to the usurpation. "When the kings of France," observes Robertson, "had thus engrossed every power which can be exerted in government; when the right of making laws, of levying money, of keeping an army of mercenaries in constant pay, of declaring war, and of concluding peace, centred in the crown—the constitution of the kingdom, which under the first race of kings was nearly democratical, which under the second race became an aristocracy, terminated, under the third race, in a pure monarchy. Every thing that tended to preserve the appearance and revive the memory of the ancient mixed government, seems from that period to have been industriously avoided. During the long and active reign of Francis I., the variety, as well as extent of whose operations obliged him to lay many heavy impositions on his subjects, the states-general in France were not once assembled, nor were the people once allowed to exert the power of taxing themselves, which, according to the original ideas of feudal government, was a right essential to every freeman." But while this righteous principle of

the old feudal system was trampled under foot by the French monarchy, much of the spirit of that system remained. The ancient noblesse still claimed and enjoyed freedom from taxation, to a very great extent, and retained many other privileges of their order. The people suffered under a double tyranny. They were crushed by monarch and nobles. This worst kind of feudalism did not fall in France till the close of the last century, and then not without a tremendous crash.

On the other side the Pyrenees there were political constitutions, both as to their form and spirit, far in advance of those just reviewed. Castile, with which the neighbouring kingdom of Leon became finally united in 1238, was a limited monarchy. Originally it had been elective; in the eleventh century it became hereditary. The old gothic national council, before the end of the next century, assumed the definite form of a *cortes* or parliament, composed of three estates, the prelates, the nobility, and the deputies from towns. From that time these three classes were constitutionally members of the assembly, and the number of representatives from the cities evince the importance of the people at that period. The legislative power was vested in the *cortes*; the king could make no laws but by their consent, and was bound, by his coronation oath, to maintain the constitution. A tone of dignified appeal was often adopted by the *cortes*, when addressing their sovereign. "If kings have

anything of great importance in hand," said they in 1469, "they ought not to undertake it, without advice and knowledge of the chief towns and cities of your kingdom." They asserted complete power over taxation. In 1420, they declared "there remains no other privilege or liberty which can be profitable to subjects, if this be shaken." They refused subsidies, when they thought they were not needful, demanded the exact appropriation of money to the purposes for which they voted it, and sometimes ventured to expostulate, in no very courtly terms, on the extravagance of their princes.

The Hermandad, or brotherhoods, some noble and others civic, were instituted, not only for the maintenance of the public peace, and for judicial purposes, as in other parts of Europe, but also for the maintenance of political rights when menaced by royal usurpation. They were formed to "prevent the king," so ran the provision, "from going on to his own ruin, and to put a stop to those who gave him ill counsel." But though the Castilian constitution was of so very free a character, and though much jealousy of royal power was often evinced both by nobles and citizens, there are numerous proofs of the fact that royalty usurped prerogatives which trespassed on the rights of the subject, and that the latter far more frequently asserted than actually enjoyed his constitutional liberties. Castile bore a close analogy to England, but violations of

law were more frequent than in our own country. "Besides these practical mischiefs, there were two essential defects in the constitution of Castile, through which, perhaps, it was ultimately subverted. It wanted those two brilliants in the coronet of British liberty, the representation of freeholders among the commons, and trial by jury." *

The constitution of Aragon was superior to that of Castile, and the spirit of liberty still more bold. "We have heard," said the brave Aragonese in their cortes of 1451, "we have always heard of old time, and it is found by experience, that seeing the great barrenness of this land, and the poverty of the realm, if it were not for the liberties thereof, the folk would go hence to live and abide in other realms, and lands more fruitful." They had obtained in 1283 their *general privilege*, the Magna Charta of Aragon, which, Mr. Hallam thinks, was, perhaps, a more satisfactory basis of civil liberty than our own. "It contains a series of provisions against arbitrary talliages, spoliations of property, secret process after the manner of the inquisition, in criminal charges, sentences of the justiciary without assent of the cortes, appointment of foreigners or Jews to judicial offices, trials of accused persons in places beyond the kingdom, the use of torture, except in charges of falsifying the coin, and the bribery of judges—these are

* Hallam.

claimed as the ancient liberties of their country." The deputies of towns appear earlier in the cortes of Aragon, than in the cortes of Castile; the earliest instance of the latter is in 1169, but in 1133 the citizens of the former had their seat in the great national council. In addition to the three classes—of the people, the nobles, and the prelates—the cortes of Aragon had a fourth estate, composed of inferior nobles, or knights, who formed an intermediate class between the popular and aristocratic orders. In the two kingdoms the power of the cortes was nearly the same, but in Aragon it was better secured. The most remarkable feature in the government of the latter was the office of *justiza*, or chief justiciary, who, in addition to his power, as supreme judge, in civil causes, was the authoritative interpreter of the laws, a sort of check upon the royal proceedings, and a guardian of constitutional rights. Perhaps he resembled, somewhat, the chief justice of England before the time of Edward I., but with larger powers. In 1348, the authority of this officer was fully and permanently established, at which time the privilege of union or brotherhood, which had prevailed in Aragon, from which it had been adopted by the state of Castile, was abolished, the influence of the justiciary superseding all necessity for such associations. Fewer attempts were made at stretching the royal prerogatives, and more of order, security, and real liberty obtained in Aragon, than in

the sister kingdom. But, after their union under Ferdinand and Isabella, the monarchical principle prevailed in Spain, subduing the power of the nobles, and crushing the liberties of the people, till kingly despotism proudly rose over the ruins of a free constitution. The brilliant events in the reign of the first Ferdinand, king of Castile and Aragon, and the illustrious virtues of his fair queen, Isabella, must not conceal from us the fact, that while they wore the united crowns, innovations were introduced which paved the way for other and greater ones, till, under Philip II., the ancient liberties of the Spanish people fell, and expired.

We must now turn our attention to the history of government in England. The Norman kings were arbitrary rulers. Their administration was tyrannical, their exactions unjust. The chroniclers of the times bitterly lament the oppressions suffered by the people. "It is not easy," says Roger de Hovedon, "to narrate the miseries which they endured at that period (1103) on account of royal exactions." "God sees the wretched people," observes the Saxon chronicler, "most unjustly oppressed; first they are despoiled of their possessions, then butchered." Dim recollections of the better times of Anglo-Saxon liberty, ere the proud and cruel Norman invaded the land, were fondly cherished by an oppressed race, and they often loudly called for a restoration of the laws of Edward the Confessor. The dawn of returning freedom, and the rise of the

English constitution, may be dated from the grant of Magna Charta. It limited the feudal demands of the sovereign,* and provided the grand securities for the liberty and property of the subject. "No centage or aid," says the venerable document, "shall be raised in our kingdom (except in the above three cases—the three feudal aids for the ransom of the lord, the knighting of his son, and the marriage of his eldest daughter), but by the general council of the kingdom;" and again, "Let no freeman be imprisoned or outlawed, or in any manner injured, otherwise than by the legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land."

This noble charter was frequently confirmed in the following reigns. Sir Edward Coke reckons no less than thirty-two instances of confirmation, several of which were purchased by the grant of subsidies to the crown—a striking proof of the value which our ancestors attached to the charter, of the struggle necessary for the establishment of its principles, and of the fact that English liberty was procured by the money of the people, as well as by the swords of the barons. The parliament which granted supplies in those days was composed of the spiritual peers, the feudal lords, and the king's tenants in chief. There was no proper representation of the people. That important element in the English constitution arose in the forty-ninth of Henry III., 1265,

* See "Glimpses of Dark Ages," 148.

when Simon de Montfort, who assumed the government of the country, after the battle of Lewes, summoned to his councils two representatives from each county, city, and borough. No doubt his reason for so doing was to strengthen his influence with the people; not perhaps without some glimpse of those broad views of political justice, with which we are happily familiar. If he thought of it only as a temporary expedient, it was one so wise and just, one which so speedily struck its roots through English society, that it happily became a permanent institution yielding the most precious fruits.

Considerable controversy has arisen as to the parties in whom the franchise was vested in early times. It seems most probable that in counties, freeholders in general had the right of voting—a right afterwards limited to those who were possessed of an estate worth forty shillings a year; while in towns, the community at large had the right of election:—all who were free burgesses, who by birth, apprenticeship, and marriage, had become stated inhabitants; who paid scot and lot; all these we apprehend had the *right* of election, though in point of *fact*, they might sometimes delegate the power of choice to a smaller number.* At first, the representatives of counties and of towns sat in the same chamber with the barons; though, as Mr. Hallam supposes,

* See the discussion in Hallam. Also, an able article on Boroughs in Penny Cyclopædia.

from the beginning, the peers and commons formed two distinct bodies. They were probably divided, as they are at present, in the eighth, ninth, and nineteenth years of Edward II.; but beyond all doubt, they were so at the beginning of the reign of Edward II.*

Two great bodies, in connexion with the crown, now swayed the destinies of England. The house of lords was composed of spiritual peers and of such as held lands *by barony*, and were *summoned* by the king to parliament. Some barons were not called to the national councils: these gradually melted away into the rank of commoners. Lay peers were created by letters patent from the king, and sometimes by statute of parliament; but they were for a long time very considerably fewer in number than the spiritual lords. The house of commons was composed of knights and town representatives, in very unequal proportions; there being two hundred and forty-six burgesses and citizens, and seventy-four knights in the parliaments of Edward I.; and two hundred and eighty-two of the former, and seventy-four of the latter, in the parliaments of Edward III. The inequality obviously proceeded from the fact of towns being so much more numerous than counties, and from the circumstance that constituencies of both kinds sent two members. Great irregularity prevailed in the numbers returned from boroughs. This irregularity proceeded from two causes—*first*, from the

* Hallam: Middle Ages, c. viii. p. 3.

unwillingness of some towns to return representatives, because they had to pay their members during the discharge of their parliamentary duties, and, also, probably because they looked upon a parliamentary election as introductory to some new tax; forgetting, in their shortsighted policy, how important it was that they should regulate the amount of the revenue they would have to supply: and, *secondly*, from the arbitrary exercise of power by the sheriffs, who, from carelessness or political motives, sometimes omitted to summon representatives from boroughs. Hence, the poverty of boroughs was, in some cases, pleaded as an excuse for not exercising their franchise; and in other cases, the sheriff, after stating the return for one or two boroughs, declared "there are no other cities or boroughs in my bailiwick," though, perhaps, there were several who had returned members to preceding parliaments.

From the first there were men who valued elective rights; who fully estimated the importance of parliamentary representation, and who zealously asserted the constitutional power of the House of Commons; as time rolled on, their sentiments were widely diffused and adopted. The English constitution rose by degrees, became better appreciated as its merits were developed, and gradually inspired in the hearts of the people a growing zeal for its security and maintenance. It seems to be one of the laws of Divine Providence, universally prevalent, that what is destined

for stability and continuance shall slowly attain to its perfection ; that the period of growth shall be proportioned to the period of its duration, in a state of maturity.

The student of English history cannot but mark with the deepest interest, and with the liveliest gratitude to Almighty God, the successive stages in the progress of our constitution. In the reign of Henry III. the limitation of royal prerogative by law was laid down as a fundamental principle by Bracton, a great lawyer and judge in those days ; and about the same time the hereditary descent of the crown became perfectly established. In the reign of Edward III. the power of parliament unfolded itself, and the illegality of raising money without parliamentary consent ;—the necessity of both houses concurring in the enactment of law ; and the right of the commons to inquire into abuses, and impeach the counsellors of the sovereign, are principles which even at that time were maintained earnestly, and with success. During the turbulent reign of the second Richard, the increasing power of the popular branch of the legislature is apparent, till, under the Lancastrian princes, the commons are found maintaining their exclusive control over taxation, directing the public expenditure, and asserting their privileges of freedom in debate, and freedom from arrest. Originally the House of Commons had only *petitioned* for what they wanted, and given assent to the laws proposed

to them ; but, in the fifteenth century, the humble parliamentary *petition* was superseded by the more dignified parliamentary *bill* ; and the representatives of the people became the legislators of their country, other measures beside those of taxation being originated in their house. Through the period before us, we observe a repeated assertion of the rights of parliament, sometimes practically denied, but still gaining ground, till they were too firmly established to be overturned. Mr. Hallam justly observes, " It were a strange misrepresentation of history to assert that the constitution had attained anything like a perfect state in the fifteenth century : but I know not whether there are any essential privileges of our countrymen, any fundamental securities against arbitrary power, so far as they depend on positive institution, which may not be traced to the time when the house of Plantagenet filled the throne."

Thus, while the efforts to establish a free constitution in France signally failed, the attempt in England was as signally successful. A distinguished writer* thinks that the great mistake in France was, that charters were not continually obtained, and that the firmness of the English constitution was established by the frequent renewal and confirmation of such instruments ; but surely the primary reason of the difference between the constitutions of the two countries is to be found in the

* Smyth : Lectures on History.

existence of that spirit of liberty which had descended from preceding times, formed no doubt by the popular leaders of the day, among whom were barons as well as others, which burned so brightly in England, but was wanting in France ; and out of which noble spirit arose the demand for charters, and other constitutional securities. Mr. Hallam, with his usual sagacity, points out two other causes which contributed to the growth of English liberty ; namely, the peculiar modification of the feudal system in England from the beginning, and the continental wars of the Plantagenet princes, who, losing their possessions in Normandy, needed large subsidies at the hands of the people, which compelled them to assemble parliaments very frequently.

It is painful to observe, that while political liberty advanced in England, liberty of conscience was flagrantly violated. In the eleventh year of Henry iv., only three years after the parliament had made a stand for certain principles of civil freedom, scarcely inferior to those embodied in the petition of right under Charles i. ; the statute was passed for burning heretics, and the Lollards, those early pioneers in the path of Protestantism, were committed to the flames. The faith, patience, and heroism of the good lord Cobham will ever live in the remembrance of posterity ; and, as the English patriot applauds the contemporaries of the martyr for the struggle they made for civil liberty, the English Protestant will lament

their blindness to still stronger and holier claims ; and will enshrine in honour the name of that illustrious individual, who suffered for denying the papal doctrine of transubstantiation, the supremacy of the pope, the meritoriousness of pilgrimages, and the worship of relics and saints, and for believing that Scripture is the sufficient and the only guide of faith, and that the mediation of Christ is the sufficient and the only ground of the sinner's hope—a truth infinitely more precious than any political maxims.

The history of the judicial part of the English constitution is equally important with that which we have just noticed, and shows the progress of true civilization. Under the Norman sovereigns, the old Saxon county courts remained, the feudal baronial courts were established, but the king's court was the only royal tribunal. Probably, at first, few cases in which the crown was not concerned, were brought before it ; but in process of time, its character for equity won upon the confidence of the English people, and its jurisdiction spread over the country at large. Itinerant judges were appointed to hold assizes in every county ; these were the justices of the court of king's bench, who took cognizance of criminal cases. The court of exchequer, and the court of common pleas, also sprung from the original king's court, and, in the reign of king John, both these tribunals were fully established, with their respective separate

jurisdictions. Traces of trial by jury appear in the reigns of the Norman kings, but it does not seem to have been adopted as a regular system till the reign of Henry II., nor was it then, or for a long period afterwards, according to the opinion of some legal antiquaries, what it is in the present day, but rather a trial by witnesses, the jurors being persons living on the spot where the case in question had occurred, and acquainted with the facts bearing upon it. The chancery court, or court of equity, was another tribunal arising out of the primitive king's court. Before the division of courts, the chancellor "sat in his marble chair in Westminster Hall, over against the marble table," but he was only an inferior officer; — after the establishment of the chancery court as a separate tribunal, the chancellor became the highest judge in the land. The discretionary power intrusted to this first law officer of England, was very great; and, in reference to its early exercise, perhaps the joke of Selden, in his "Table Talk," was applicable, "Equity is according to the conscience of him that is chancellor, and as that is larger or narrower, so is equity. It is all one, as if they should make the standard for the measure, or call a foot a chancellor's foot: what an uncertain measure would this be! one chancellor has a long foot, another a short foot, a third an indifferent foot; it is the same thing in the chancellor's conscience." But since the times to which

Selden refers, principles and precedents have been established in the court of chancery, which render the witticism of the great lawyer, just quoted, inapplicable in modern times.

But though provision was admirably made, in various ways, for the administration of justice, it was very far from effectually securing the peace of society, and guarding the person and property of the subject. Much anarchy prevailed in England. There was no efficient police. Courts of justice were often over-awed, or bribed; and the arm of the law was resisted by violence. In cases of a disputed claim to property, men did not quietly wait for the decision of a legal tribunal, but proceeded, in the most summary manner, to take possession by force. A regular siege was thought far more effective than a chancery suit. In "the Paston Letters" may be traced the complete history of a siege, carried on by the duke of Norfolk, in order to gain possession of Caister Castle, in Norfolk, then occupied by sir John Paston, to which the duke asserted that he had a legal claim. Warlike preparations were made by both parties, and the assault and defence were sustained with much military skill. The matter was fiercely contested; but at length Paston was obliged to surrender to the duke of Norfolk. Though disseisin, or forcible dispossession of freeholds, is still permitted by English law, it is distinctly provided that the entry must be made peaceably, and therefore

these violent proceedings must not be confounded with any process under legal sanction. Other usages of a similarly rude and uncivilised description, prevailed in those times. Acts of parliament and contemporary chroniclers furnish abundant proof of the prevalence of rapine, violence, riot, and murder. Travelling without great precaution was unsafe, and the highways round a town were cleared two hundred feet on either side, that there might be no lurking-place for the thief or murderer. "Aunt Moundford," says Margaret Paston, in writing to her right worshipful husband, "hath delivered to me twenty merks in gold for you, to have at your coming home, for she dare not adventure her money to be brought up to London, for fear of robbing, for it is said that there goeth many thieves between this and London." In the same collection of letters, we read of a street scuffle between two great men and their retainers: "they fell in handes togyder," one smote another "a grette stroke on the hed," a knife was drawn, and an attempt made at stabbing: "and all this was done, as men say, in a paternoster while," *i.e.*, the time it would take to repeat the Lord's prayer. The scuffle did not end till several persons were severely wounded, and two men slain. Sometimes, also, debtors obtained outlawries against their creditors, that they might avoid payment of what they owed. All this marks the weakness of the laws, the lingering remains of feudal manners,

the imperfect state of civilization, as to the order of society, and the low state of general integrity and morals. Yet after all, probably, England before the sixteenth century will bear a favourable comparison with other countries at the same time.

Looking at the history of the English constitution, we see a marked peculiarity raising it above contemporary forms of political civilization. The aristocracy and the people were linked together. "The civil equality of all freemen below the rank of peerage, and the subjection of peers themselves to the impartial arm of justice, and to a just share in contribution to public burdens—advantages unknown to other countries, tended to identify the interests and assimilate the feelings of the aristocracy with those of the people: classes whose dissension and jealousy have been in many instances the surest hope of sovereigns aiming at arbitrary power." England, in its early history, exhibits not a struggle between the aristocracy and the people, but a conflict on the part of each of these, sometimes both combined, against the undue prerogative of the crown.

The whole of this chapter certainly teaches us that forms of government, however wise, are not sufficient in themselves to secure the liberty, peace, and happiness of a people. Christian virtue among rulers, the infusion of the spirit of God's great moral laws into the constitution and administration of the laws of

man, the prevalence of evangelical truth exhibiting the strongest motives to the cultivation of social virtues, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the churches of the land, are the best and indeed the only effectual guarantees for the true welfare of society.—“Righteousness exalteth a nation : but sin is a reproach to any people.” The fairest hopes for our own beloved country rest upon the prevalence of the pure and undefiled religion of our Lord Jesus Christ among all ranks of the community. Nothing else can save England from the common fate of empires. But this will. Let the cross of Christ be lifted up above her commerce, her civilisation, her armies, and her liberties : let it be her glory and defence : let the gospel pervade all ranks, filling with its blessed light the palaces of her princes and the cottages of her peasantry ;—and the temple of her greatness shall not become a ruin on which Time writes his epitaphs, but a pillar of strength that shall remain till Time shall die ; her destiny shall be a new thing in the earth, and the long page of her history, filled with the illustrations of a merciful Providence, shall be read with interest and admiration in the light of eternity.

CHAPTER V.

LITERATURE.

SECTION I.

SCHOLASTICISM.

THE revival of literature began with the schoolmen. They were theologians, who employed the philosophy of Aristotle to define and support their own system of divinity. For the earliest efforts of the human intellect, in modern times, to be directed to philosophical speculations, was an inversion of the natural order of knowledge, in which poetry, the offspring of imagination, leads the way, and philosophy, the child of reason, brings up the rear; but this inversion may be accounted for by the fact that the re-awakened intellect of churchmen, who were the only scholars and students of the age, naturally directed itself to theological subjects, and was led to treat them after somewhat the same fashion as had been adopted by the most celebrated writers of the early church. The Christian fathers mingled the philosophy of the age with their theological discussions; but their philosophy was for the most part of the Platonic school. The

scholastics followed in their steps, but they chose Aristotle, instead of Plato and his followers, for their master. The writings of the peripatetic philosopher were known in the west, *chiefly* through the Saracens. It is a mistake, Guizot observes, to say that Aristotle was "*first* introduced to the knowledge of modern Europe by the Arabians, and the Arabians only; for from the fifth to the tenth century, there is no epoch in which we do not find them mentioned in some library, in which they were not known and studied by some men of letters."* Greek was little understood, and therefore Aristotle's works could not be much read in the original. The Saracens, however, had translated them into Arabic; and some of the Latins, who studied among the Saracens, becoming acquainted with them, by that means translated them into their own language.

These men who studied and revived philosophy, and took the lead in teaching the scholastic method, exhibited in their studies and lucubrations a wonderful unity of spirit and manner, unlike the ancient Greeks, who greatly differed from each other in their modes of philosophizing. "It is one note that we hear sounding throughout all. One might think that it was some mechanical process, by which the several elaborate systems of these authors had been constructed; so little evidence is there in them of the vitality of human na-

* European Civilization, ii. 232.

ture.”* This unity of method, however, did not prevent the formation of sects, and the existence of the fiercest rivalry and contention. Each learned doctor had a band of followers; and while these disciples adored every one his own master, they seem to have been very fierce in their enmity to his rival. Brucker tells an amusing story of a scholastic, who vented his spleen on Durandus, a celebrated doctor of the thirteenth century, by writing the following epitaph :—

“Durus Durandus jacet hic sub marmore duro,
An sit salvandus ego nescio nec quoque curo.”

Which may be thus rendered—

“Entombed in marble pomp
Durandus lieth here,
But whether he be saved or lost,
I neither know nor care.”

It was well when the contentions of the schools effervesced in this harmless way; but sometimes more serious assaults were made by these philosophers on each other, and the walls of universities witnessed very unseemly, and even sanguinary conflicts.

The schoolmen warmly assailed each other: they have been all alike assailed by posterity; and now, while “their writings have ceased to belong to men, and have become the property of moths,” their name is treated with ridicule and scorn. To estimate their influence, and weigh their merits, is a difficult task. The

* Hampden: Life of Thomas Aquinas.

minute distinctions, the numerous divisions, and the stiff and formal arrangement which have characterised too much the theological literature of later days, are no doubt to be attributed to the influence of the scholastic method—a method of treating Christianity which tends greatly to mar its beauty, fetter its gracefulness, and trammel its free and divine spirit. The fact shows, that although the schoolmen themselves have been long unstudied, if not forgotten, they produced an unfavourable influence upon theological studies which centuries have not entirely effaced. It must also be admitted that many of their discussions turned upon very frivolous and useless points of inquiry, which have been often exposed, and severely ridiculed, by those who have written popular descriptions of their controversies. Yet let justice be done to these philosophers. Some of them were men of vigorous and acute minds; men, who, had they lived in a more auspicious age, might have accomplished works of immortal worth and renown; but they were the slaves of authority, though they attempted to break away from its bonds; and in the service of a vain and corrupt church, frequently expended their intellectual vigour upon trifles, reminding us somewhat of the heathen story of Hercules, who was held in captivity by Omphale, the queen of Lydia, spell-bound by her dangerous charms, and who sat at her feet with a distaff, spinning webs at her command.

Hallam, who looks with no great partiality on this class of writers, acknowledges that there are rays of metaphysical genius appearing through their repulsive technicalities, which this age ought not to despise; and he admits that the attention paid to this philosophy was a source of improvement in the intellectual character of Europe compared with preceding ages. Mackintosh gives a still more favourable view, and observes that they opened questions untouched by the ancients; and veins of speculation, since mistakenly supposed to have been first explored in modern times: they anticipated most of the modern metaphysical controversies; and the germs of some of the distinguishing opinions of Locke, and Reid, and others, may be found in their dusty volumes. "Those who measure only by palpable results, have very consistently regarded the metaphysical and theological controversies of the schools as a mere waste of intellectual power. But the contemplation of the athletic vigour and versatile skill manifested by the European understanding, at the moment when it emerged from this tedious and rugged discipline, leads, if not to approbation, yet to more qualified censure;—what might have been the result of a different combination of circumstances, is an inquiry which, on a large scale, is beyond human power. We may, however, venture to say that no abstract science, unconnected with religion, was likely to be respected in that

age; and we may be allowed to doubt whether any knowledge, dependent directly on experience, and applicable to immediate practice, would have so trained the European mind, as to qualify it for that series of inventions, and discoveries, and institutions, which begins with the sixteenth century, and of which no end can now be seen but the extinction of the human race."* Hampden, in his beautiful "Life of Thomas Aquinas," the prince of the schoolmen, remarks, that if penetration of thought, comprehensiveness of views, exactness the most minute, an ardour of inquiry the most keen, a patience of pursuit the most unwearied, are among the merits of the philosopher, then may Aquinas dispute even the first place among the candidates for the supremacy in speculative science. And he adds, at the close of his most able disquisition on the scholastic philosophy, the best in our language, that though the schoolmen were slaves to authority, the tendency of their speculations was to magnify reason against the principle of mere authority. "And on this account (though the assertion may seem strange) the schoolmen must undoubtedly be reckoned among the precursors of the reformation both of religion and philosophy." Scholasticism opened the way for modern research and speculation. It awakened the human mind from its torpor, sharpened its

* Ency. Brit. Dissertation by sir J. Mackintosh.

faculties, and excited it to action. The schoolmen were among the heralds and precursors of the revival of knowledge. Their antique garb is not agreeable to our modern taste, the functions of their office as harbingers and pioneers have been long since suspended by the arrival of that knowledge for which they prepared; but their antiquated forms should still excite some veneration, and the remembrance of their past services should awaken some gratitude.

In the twelfth century, there was also a revival of legal studies. The pandects of Justinian, the famous code of Roman jurisprudence, was the grand text-book for the students of law; and the acquisition of this branch of knowledge became a favourite pursuit throughout civilized Europe. In the promotion of both scholastic and legal studies, the establishment of numerous universities, to which vast crowds of students flocked, afforded important and efficient aid: and it should not be forgotten that the revival of the study of Roman law has produced no small effect on modern civilization, by contributing to mould some of the systems of jurisprudence adopted in the present day.

SECTION II.

POETRY.

But we must turn to the lighter studies of poetry. The spirit of poetry lay dormant for ages. What little was produced, and it was

very poor,* appeared in the Latin tongue; but at the period now before us, the modern languages of Europe were in a course of formation. The old Latin, corrupted by other dialects, was in a transition state, and was fast passing into the modern French, Spanish, and Italian; and in the more northern countries, languages of a Gothic origin, the German and Anglo-Saxon, were being formed. These different tongues, in their infancy, were animated by a poetical spirit. Poetry formed them. In the shape of poetry their earliest relics are to be found.

The troubadours, that tuneful band, numerous as the birds on a summer eve, appeared in the south of France, in the twelfth century. Their compositions were lyrical; and the versification, though rude, no doubt had powerful charms "when listened to round the hearth of some ancient castle." Several hundred troubadour poets appeared between the year 1126 and the end of the next century. The brave and the fair, the noble, the prince, are included in the roll of these ancient bards; but most of the authors of this class have left their compositions without a name: and what has been said by a critic of early Spanish poetry, will apply to the early poetry of other parts of Europe.—"We pass as through a long vista of monuments without inscriptions, as the traveller approaches the noise and bustle of modern

* The poems of Avitus must be excepted; but they belong to the sixth century, and are to be regarded as among the last lays of ancient poetry.

Rome, through the lines of silent and unknown tombs which border the Appian Way." In Spain, the troubadours flourished; and the German Minne, or love singers, of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were of the same family. A taste for lyrical compositions extensively prevailed, and the troubadour song was welcomed by the Norman prince, the Spanish noble, and the German peasant.

Metrical romances, too, were composed. Tales redolent of chivalry, love, and satire, were related and sung in verse. The *Cid*, a Spanish poem, describing the adventures of the famous knight Rodrigo, contemporary with William the Conqueror; and Reynard the Fox, a French or German satire, on the vices and corruption of the ecclesiastics, were among the most popular of this class on the continent. English romances were also produced, respecting which, Bishop Percy, in one of his *Dissertations on the Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, observes that "many of them exhibit no mean attempts at epic composition; and though full of the exploded fictions of chivalry, frequently display great descriptive and inventive powers in the bards who composed them."*

These romances were sung by wandering minstrels, who were often the authors of the compositions they rehearsed. With a harp in their hand and songs in their memory, they visited the castle and the cottage, and by

* *Reliques*, vol. i. 16.

their strains, plaintive or heroic, grave or gay, soothed or aroused the passions. Some of these bards and musicians no doubt came to England in the Conqueror's train.

These bards prepared for noble names. Geoffrey Chaucer was the morning-star of English poetry. Of his tales, so graphic, sportive, pathetic, and instructive, we can only say that, though their style is obsolete, their spirit is so truly natural and beautiful, that in every age they will delight the man of taste and feeling. About the same time, Italy produced its noble triumvirate, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch—the first the predecessor, the last two contemporaries, of Chaucer. Very imperfect and incomplete views will be entertained of the character and influence of these writers, if they be regarded merely as poets who entertained their contemporaries: they formed the language of their respective countries. Chaucer was the father of the English, and Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, were the parents of the Italian tongue.

Most of the early poets, too, were, in spirit, reformers. They exposed the ecclesiastical corruptions of the age. Even the troubadours apostrophized Rome as outwardly a lamb, but inwardly a devouring wolf and a crowned serpent.* Our own Chaucer, and *Piers Plowman*, pretty sharply administer the lash to the corrupt ecclesiastics. Petrarch abounds in passages of terrific power against the vices of the

* Rossetti's *Anti-Papal Spirit*, etc., vol. i. 7.

papacy ; and a modern Italian critic maintains that Dante's *Commedia* is, throughout, an allegorical attack on Rome.*

But while we admire the poetic genius, and honour the truthful and earnest spirit of those early bards, we lament that their strains, especially those of the troubadours, were polluted by that spirit of licentiousness which was the characteristic of the age.

SECTION III.

BOOKS AND EDUCATION.

IN the twelfth century, there sprung up among the monastic brotherhoods a fresh spirit of zeal in the transcription of manuscripts. The classical authors seem to rise in their estimation, for copies of these become more abundant from that period ; though, it should be added, they were not made with all the accuracy which could be desired. Most of the Benedictine monasteries had libraries : some, in the estimation of that age, were rich in Greek and Latin authors. France was before Italy in the pursuit of learning at this time ; but in the latter part of the thirteenth century, the Italians began to take the lead. Books were multiplied in great numbers. In the prosperous cities of Italy, there were persons who gained their livelihood by copying books ; and it appeared, though they still were very dear, they were less so there, than in other parts of Europe. Charles v. of France, in the

* Rossetti.

fourteenth century, laid the foundation of the royal library of the Louvre; but it did not number, at first, more than nine hundred volumes, a very scanty collection compared with modern libraries, but a considerable one at that time.

In the fifteenth century we find notices of English libraries, but they do not appear to have been either large or valuable. The duke of Gloucester has been said to have bequeathed a library of 600 volumes to Oxford University, but a recent antiquarian* reduces the number to 129. He also mentions a library in the priory of Bretton, in Yorkshire, consisting of about 150 volumes. At the same time signs of a love of literature appeared in Germany. The brotherhood of Deventer, a peculiar order of religionists, somewhat like the modern Moravians, occupied themselves a good deal in copying and binding books.

With respect to the state of education in society, generally, Mr. Hallam has stated some satisfactory grounds for believing that there was a great improvement after the eleventh century. All engaged in the study and administration of Roman law, and they were very numerous, must have been masters of reading and writing. The revival of commerce would promote the diffusion of the elements of knowledge as necessary to keeping accounts. A passage in Ingulf mentions the practice in English schools of construing Latin into

• Rev. Joseph Hunter.

French. Many of the troubadours must have had some literary taste and knowledge, and, no doubt, their productions were extensively read. The fashion of writing private letters in French came in among us soon after 1270.* Reading was more common than writing; and men were better educated than women. Needlework, domestic matters, and church music, seem to have been the chief female accomplishments of the age; reading, and the keeping of accounts, were perhaps not unfrequently added. Chaucer's prioress, in the fourteenth century, had been educated in a school at Stratford-the-Bow, and there learned a sort of French, but the poet chiefly descants on the polite manners she had acquired. He also mentions reading and singing as the education of children. Many a little seminary in his days was formed in the room over the church porch, where the schoolmaster imparted his scanty instructions; and we can fancy we hear the hum of our boyish ancestors conning over their uncouth dialect, and now and then we catch the strain of their chants and songs breaking upon the silence of an old English village. In the fifteenth century education advanced in England, both as to character and extent. The Paston Letters, which we have frequently quoted, afford evidence of this. "It appears highly probable that such a series of letters, with so much vivacity and pertinence, would not have been written by

* Hallam's Int. of Lit. of Europe, vol. i. 68.

any family of English gentry in the reign of Richard II., and much less before."

SECTION IV.

REVIVAL OF GENERAL LEARNING.

LITERATURE flourished in Europe, generally, more in the thirteenth century than in the early part of the fifteenth century. The progress of learning was irregular and interrupted. The light waxed and waned again. The revival of classical literature in Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century, most powerfully contributed to give a lasting impetus to the improvement of knowledge and taste. That it should spring up there was natural. Modern Italy has learned to identify herself with the mighty people who had once dwelt on her soil, and stamped her scenery with the memorials of their deeds. The citizens of Rome had been now, for some little time, accustomed to gaze with revived interest on those venerable monuments of classical antiquity, which adorned the scenes of their daily life; and while they read their almost faded inscriptions, as they trod the forum, and lingered round the ruins of the capitol, they meditated on the transactions which had encircled them with a halo of brightness. Rienzi, the last of the tribunes, had, by his stirring appeals, re-quickened into life the old Roman spirit; and, by his daring enthusiasm, had created a revolution, which, though it produced but a temporary political

effect, left behind it more enduring results on the minds of his countrymen. This revived a taste for the classical works of antiquity. Wealthy patrons of learning arose in Italy, manuscripts were collected, books were multiplied, libraries were formed; and well might the literary Italian be absorbed in the study of Livy and Virgil, amidst the scenes they described, or peruse, with the keenest relish, the poetry, histories, and philosophy of Greece, redolent of all that antique classic beauty, which had formed the models of the literature that flourished in their country's golden days. During the latter part of the fifteenth century, Florence, with Lorenzo de Medici at its head, surrounded by the chief men of genius in Italy, appears as the chief temple and retreat of learning. And one cannot think of the fair Florence, with its groves and gardens, pinnacles and towers, of the illustrious Lorenzo, the patron of learning, and of the society formed there for the study of the works of Plato, without regarding it as something like a revival of ancient Athens, when Pericles was in his glory, or when Plato himself taught in the groves of the Academy. It is, however, to be feared, that the devotion of these elegant scholars to the ancient philosophy and poetry of Greece and Rome, was far greater than their devotion to the religion of Christ.—His religion, in its inspired records, indeed, presents Divine philosophy and poetry; but, alas! it must be confessed, that in the fifteenth century it was so

corrupted and obscured, as to present no very inviting aspect to the minds of these students. But Christianity, properly understood, harmonizes with the purest reason ; and its illustrations, as presented in the sacred volume, commend themselves to the admiration of the severest taste.

Of all the impulses given to the revival of learning, the invention of the art of printing was the greatest. It was a wonderful era in the history of literature, and of man, when, about the year 1455, the Mazarin Bible issued from the press, the precursor of the myriad volumes which have since flowed in daily streams from that precious fountain. The discovery of America, and a passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, concurred in propelling onward the newly-awakened spirit of inquiry and thought. They gave an impulse to the sciences connected with navigation, they rectified errors in geography, and spread before the European mind the map of the world. They gave a shock to ancient prejudices, and expanded before men's views extensive scenes full of novel objects, awakening fresh ideas and feelings. Columbus, in ploughing the waves to the continent of the west, was opening the way to a new field, where literature, in all its forms of history, philosophy, poetry, and religion, was to be sown, and vegetate, and flourish. The weather-beaten mariner traversing the Atlantic was a pioneer clearing the way for the introduction

to other lands of the treasures of classic antiquity, and of the still richer treasures of revelation; and along with these the knowledge of the art of printing, to disseminate both. Lorenzo de Medici, in his palace, and Christopher Columbus, in his bark, were both serving in the cause of social improvement, and the increase and diffusion of knowledge.

The revival of learning prepared for the Reformation. The Reformation paid back the debt of obligation with interest. It gave fresh impetus to the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages, criticism, history, and antiquities. It roused to the study of these, not only friends, but enemies; for the latter being attacked by literary weapons, felt it necessary to use them in defence. By producing vernacular translations of the Scriptures, the Reformation helped to fix the languages of Europe, and to stamp them in their respective countries as the current mediums of intellectual and religious communication. It encouraged a spirit of inquiry, extended its own bold and ardent genius beyond the boundaries of religion into the domains of literary and scientific pursuit, threw down the idol of human authority over the soul of man, overturned the throne of prejudice, and taught men to subject all opinions to the test of revelation and reason. It gathered round its banner men of fine talents and extensive acquirements, who studied and wrote not only to convince the scholar, but to illuminate, quicken, and purify

the minds of men in general. They were the fathers of popular literature. Their books were not for the few, but for the many. After the Reformation, the European mind seemed to shake off the lingering slumbers of the middle ages, and fully and finally to wake. Genius in a short period appeared in many forms. Poetry, full of beauty and sublimity, was revived. Italy produced a Tasso, Spain a Camoens, England a Shakspeare. The ancient literature of Greece and Rome was studied with ardour, and our own country improved in classic lore. Speculative, moral, political, and scientific learning excited attention: and theology in particular was studied with a zeal worthy of its Divine claims. The Bible was appealed to as the only authority for religious faith, and those truths so needed by every soul, so cherished by heaven-taught ones—even salvation through the work of Christ alone, and renewal by the grace of his Holy Spirit—were openly proclaimed from the pulpit and the press, pouring light on those who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guiding their feet into the paths of peace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARTS.

SECTION I.

ARCHITECTURE.

IN the cultivation of the arts, the progress of society was more rapid and brilliant than in the pursuit of literature. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century ecclesiastical architecture flourished, and those fine churches and cathedrals were reared, which are the admiration of modern times. The earliest specimens in our own island, coming within the period embraced in our sketches, are in the Norman style, which was introduced by the Conqueror, and continued to fashion ecclesiastical buildings till about the death of Henry II. It was probably formed upon the model of the Lombard architecture. Its massive round pillars, semicircular arches, deeply recessed doorways, small windows, and shallow arcades, the arches sometimes intersecting, may be seen plain or adorned in Winchester, Rochester, Durham, Norwich, and Peterborough cathedrals; specimens, too, of the peculiarities of this style, together with its

heavy stunted tower, may be found in some of the picturesque and ivy-clad churches which adorn the villages of our land. Anglo-Norman architecture evinced a decided improvement of taste on what prevailed before, but it was eclipsed by the productions of a later age. The Gothic, or pointed style of architecture, commenced in the twelfth century, and rose in England, in its decided form, about the beginning of the reign of Henry III. Its appearance in different parts of Europe was almost simultaneous. The similarity in the general character of structures raised about the same time, in different places, has been often remarked; as, for example, an eminent architect speaks of Notre Dame at Paris as being cast in the same mould with Westminster Abbey. This fact, together with the question as to its origin, has given rise to a great amount of speculation. Into this perplexing inquiry it is impossible for us here to enter, but it may be observed, that the opinion respecting its general contemporaneous prevalence is highly probable. Mr. Hope attributes this to the society of Freemasons, who were the architects and builders of the middle ages, formerly a fraternity, spreading their ramifications over Europe, and keeping up with each other in distant countries the best correspondence which the times allowed.

The early English Gothic, forming the first era in the reign of the pointed style in our own island, prevailed in the thirteenth century.

Sharp arches, slender columns, long, narrow, and lancet-shaped windows, high-pitched roofs, buttressed walls, and a singular toothed projection, in the way of ornament, within the moulding of arches, distinguish this style from the preceding. Whoever has walked up the middle aisle, or stood under the tower, of Salisbury cathedral—a perfect and uniform specimen of this class of buildings—must have felt that the architect who reared it was possessed alike of consummate taste, artistic skill, and scientific knowledge. The decorated style succeeded the early English, and its prevalence is coincident with the fourteenth century. It is characterised with us, says Mr. Whewell, “by its window tracery, geometrical in the early instances, flowing in the later; but also, and perhaps better, by its triangular canopies crocketed and finialed, its niched buttresses with triangular heads, its peculiar mouldings, no longer a collection of equal rounds, with hollows, like the early English, but an assemblage of various members, some broad, and some narrow, beautifully grouped and proportioned.”

The windows of that period are peculiarly rich, but chaste, of exquisite proportion, and tasteful detail, of which fine specimens exist in Worcester, York, Exeter, and other cathedrals. This period affords what the most distinguished architectural critics consider *perfect* specimens of the Gothic style; and even the unpractised eye, on comparing the parts and

proportions of the edifices of the former century with the buildings of this, will detect still more of symmetry and harmony, while, in ornamental details, he will recognise a warmer and more luxuriant style of beauty, yet chastened by even fastidious taste. The buildings of the next century, the fifteenth, have so many characteristic features, that they have been classed under several distinct terms. They are denominated *florid*, from their profuse ornament; *perpendicular*, and also *horizontal*, from their numerous lines of both kinds as to architectural principles and details. Perhaps the style might as fairly be called the *paneled* style, on account of the beautiful arrangement of panels which it exhibits, especially in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and King's College, Cambridge. Depressed or four-centred arches, windows very large, with mullions and transoms, arched door-ways with square heads and full mouldings, and spandrells filling up the space on each side between the arch and the moulded heads, flying buttresses, "vast pendants hanging in the air,"—these are some of the peculiarities of this kind of architecture, and illustrate the wild, sportive, and rather extravagant taste which superseded the fashion of the former age. Yet, though it must be confessed, that the style of the fifteenth century gives signs of the decline of perfect architectural beauty, one cannot but feel charmed at the wonders which the mason of that day achieved in stone.

THE ARTS.

In the forms of architecture, we see the expression of mind. Cathedrals and churches are the embodiments of ideas originating in the intellect of men who loved to picture to themselves the beautiful. Such structures have been called epics in stones, and they are so. The storied window, the lofty arch, the elegant columns, are so many stanzas, composed of lines and syllables, written in sculptured masonry, while the whole is redolent of genius and the muse. We have traced the stages of architecture, and pointed out their characteristic marks, that the reader, if unacquainted with the subject before, may learn to gaze with a more intelligent eye, and with deeper interest, upon the old cathedrals and churches, around whose walls, and among whose vaulted aisles, he may sometimes wander on a holiday afternoon in summer. He may learn something there, he may trace some sketches of the intellectual history of the middle ages, and may hold fellowship with minds whose taste bloomed so luxuriantly after a long winter season of barbarism.

Gothic architecture began to decline in England in the fifteenth century; it flourished longer in some other parts of Europe. Among the chief causes of its decline on the continent, especially in Italy, was the revival of a classic taste, which led to the erection of St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome, and other churches. In the construction of these superb edifices, the architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans

seemed restored under the direction of the genius of Michael Angelo and other illustrious architects of the age.

The progress of art in the history of military and civil architecture, is less striking than in the ecclesiastical department. Castles were the chief buildings of this order in Europe, through nearly the whole of the period under our review. These edifices became very numerous in England, under the Norman kings, and resembled, in their construction, the feudal castles of France.* In the fourteenth century, there was a great improvement in this style of architecture—regard was paid, not only to defence, but to appearance and effect. The strength of the fortress was combined with somewhat of the convenience and grandeur of the mansion. The keep was enlarged, the apartments made more spacious, towers were added, connected by walls, so as to form a court-yard, the gateway was generally flanked by two lofty towers, and contained convenient rooms; the open loop-hole was superseded by the glazed window; and in some cases by the elegant oriel. The gloomy halls were rendered a little cheerful, the oaken rafters were carved and ornamented, the walls were painted with quaint scenes, scriptural or chivalrous, and the chamber, with its tapestry hangings, approximated to something like comfort. All this indicates some progress in taste and civilization, but especially it shows that the state of

* See "Glimpses of the Dark Ages."

society was less turbulent. Intestine wars must have been on the decline, to allow of the baron's turning his attention from the fortification to the adornment of his stronghold. Warwick Castle is a fine specimen of the architecture of the fourteenth century, and furnishes an illustration of the remarks just made. In the next century, the houses of the nobleman exhibited less of the castle, and more of the mansion. Arrangements for defence were not totally neglected; a feudal character still lingered about the building; but regard to domestic comfort and festive splendour evidently prevailed in the construction of its chambers, halls, and courts. Haddon Hall, in Derbyshire, at least the inner quadrangle, is an illustration of this point; some parts of that interesting building are of later date. Could we have seen the interior soon after the erection of the house, we should have witnessed a manifest improvement on the former age.

Houses of the first class in the sixteenth century retain very little of a castellated appearance, and evince many striking traits of quaint taste, and picturesque beauty. Brick was more commonly used than stone, curious and elaborate ornaments were in some instances wrought in this material over the gateways; and the twisted chimneys form a characteristic feature of the houses in those days. This style of architecture, which is commonly called the Tudor style, was succeeded

by the Elizabethan, in which the prevalence of Italian taste was strongly marked.

Next to the castle, was the manor house. In the twelfth century this kind of edifice was generally two stories high, the lower one vaulted, and having no internal communication with the upper part — access to that story being by means of a flight of steps on the outside. The upper chamber only was furnished with a fire-place. Houses of this description had square-headed windows. In the fourteenth century the chief room was still in the upper story, but a turret stair-case was introduced in the interior, and the entrance was on the ground floor. A large irregular court was also formed by stables, and other buildings surrounded by a moat. In some cases, perhaps, the court was quadrangular. In the fifteenth century, manor houses evince an improvement. Ockwells, in Berks, is an example; at each end are two large gables, then two small ones forming the porch, the other the hall window; the centre of the building consists of a recess. These gables display large boards, carved and ornamented. Towards the end of the century, tower gateways were sometimes used for the entrance to manor houses.* The ordinary manor houses, however, were very plain and simple, even at the latter end of the period before us. We may observe, that the town houses, or inns, of the

* Glossary. Oxford. Domestic Architecture. This work has been of great service in the preparation of this chapter.

nobility, were, many of them, in the fifteenth century, very spacious. In some cases they exhibited a profusion of richly carved timber. Common houses had a narrow façade and overhanging gable, which was the prevalent style of town architecture till the seventeenth century.

The houses of the common people in towns and villages, were of a very humble character. Some were mud-walled cottages, others were built of timber, and a third class were composed of wood, as to their frame-work, but the piers in the walls were filled up with stone or mortar. A chimney, here and there, crowned the roof of the better sort, but, ordinarily, only an aperture was left for the escape of the smoke. Glazed windows were rare; perhaps they were never found in common houses, light being commonly admitted through an opening of lattice work.

We dare say that some of our readers who have visited certain remains of the domestic architecture of the fifteenth century, Haddon Hall for example, have, while perusing this rapid survey of such buildings, pictured to themselves the principal apartment in edifices of that order; the spacious hall, with the minstrel's gallery, ornamented in front with armour and antlers; the oaken roof, like the hull of some old vessel; the windows running on one side so high as to leave room for the tapestry hangings beneath; the dais at the further end, and the projecting bay window beside it;—such a picture brings up before us illustrations

of the state of society at that period; and it will assist in filling up the scenes with groups of the men and women of those days, and traits of their habits and customs, to turn to the manuscripts of the antiquarian Aubrey, and quote the following passages:—"The lords of manors did eat in their great Gothic halls at the high table or oriel; the folk at the side table. The meat was served up by watchwords. Jacks are but an invention of the other day: the poor boys did turn the spits, and licked the dripping-pan, and grew to be huge lusty knaves. The body of the servants were in the great hall as now in the guard chamber, privy chamber, etc. The hearth was commonly in the midst, as at colleges; whence the saying, 'Round about our coal fire.' Here in the halls were the mummings, cob-loaf stealing, and great number of old Christmas plays performed. In great houses were lords of misrule during the twelve days after Christmas."*

SECTION II.

PAINTING AND SCULPTURE.

BUT to return to the progress of art. Painting is connected with architecture—painted walls, panels, altar pieces, screens, monuments, and roofs, are of frequent occurrence in this country during the period under review, and there is abundant evidence that oil colours

* Aubrey manuscript, in Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Quarterly Review, vol. xlv. 497.

were used in England long before their alleged discovery by Van Eyck on the continent. But until the close of the fifteenth century, the art, amongst us, was in a very low and imperfect state. The illuminations in manuscripts are far better specimens of the state of painting. But painting did not revive in England till long after the time to which our sketches relate. Italy was the birth-place of that beautiful art in its modern form, and to Giotto, in the thirteenth century, must its parentage be ascribed. A writer near his time, exclaimed with wonder, respecting his pictures, "The personages who are in grief look melancholy, and those who are joyous look gay!" an exclamation which seems to indicate the revolution which this eminent painter had introduced, by the expression which he had depicted in his faces, instead of being satisfied with the stiff doll-like madonnas of the Greek school, which, before his time, had been the types for all artists to imitate. Giotto was followed in the fourteenth century by other artists, who, while they were not unmindful of their great master, sought, each for himself, an originality of style; and strove to embody the poetic and beautiful ideals, which their rich imaginations had created. Ghiberti was distinguished among them, and has left an immortal monument of his skill, both as an artist and sculptor, in the gate of St. John the Baptist at Florence, which he modelled and executed; and which, with its fellow-gate, the work of

Andrea Pisano, Michael Angelo pronounced worthy to be the gates of paradise. The works of Italian artists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have been the admiration of all ages since, and evince the high intellectual and spiritual character to which they had raised this branch of art. If a noble Gothic building be a poem in stone, a fine picture by one of the Italian masters is a poem on canvas. Such a production is not to be merely looked at, but studied. Who that has any taste but feels this, as he walks through our galleries of ancient pictures, or visits the room at Hampton Court, where Raphael's cartoons seem, notwithstanding their faded colours, to live and breathe as we look upon them.

To the north of the Alps, painting revived before the close of our period. Hubert and John Van Eyck were distinguished Flemish masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and laid the foundation of that school of art which characterises the Netherlands, and is marked by the most careful imitation of nature; thus differing from the Italian by embodying the actual rather than the ideal. Albert Durer, the great master of the German school, flourished at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In short, there was a wonderful revival of taste in painting at the close of the ages we have reviewed. The pencil vied with the pen in expressing the fresh and truthful ideas

which were luxuriantly springing up in human minds, in that vernal season. Architecture, painting, and sculpture, are closely connected, and these three professions were often united by the early artists of modern times. The last of these may be said to owe the revival of its ancient beauty and expression to Nicolo Pisano, an Italian genius of the thirteenth century. "Yet it is very remarkable," as Flaxman observes, "that the sculpture on the western front of Wells cathedral was finished in 1242, two years after the birth of Crinabue, the restorer of painting in Italy; and the work was going on at the same time that Nicolo Pisano, the Italian restorer of sculpture, exercised the art in his own country: it was also finished forty-six years before the cathedral of Amiens, and thirty-six before that of Arvietto was begun; and it seems to be the first specimen of such magnificence and varied sculpture, united in a series of sacred history, that is to be found in western Europe."

This shows that England at that time would bear honourable comparison, in one branch of the arts at least, with Italy itself. But sculpture did not continue to flourish here as on the other side of the Alps. In the family of Pisano, a genius for this art seems to have been hereditary. It was his son Andrea who wrought the first gate of St. John the Baptist, at Florence. Lorenzo Ghiberti has been already mentioned as the illustrious sculptor who made the other, the two portals exhibiting a picture

or poem in bronze. Other great names follow, till we come to Michael Angelo, whose allegorical statues of the Night, Morning, Dawn, and Twilight, have been the admiration of all who have visited Florence.

SECTION III.

ENGRAVING AND PRINTING.

THE Italian artists attained high excellence in the art of metal, gem, and seal engraving. Benevento Cellini is a well-known name belonging to the early part of the sixteenth century, and was distinguished alike as a sculptor and engraver. The fine old shield, so elaborately wrought, which still adorns the guard-chamber of Windsor Castle, is a familiar example of his ingenuity.

Copper-plate engraving was a beautiful discovery, which may be said to have sprung, by accident, from the practice of engraving on metals. The goldsmiths of Italy, in the fifteenth century, were accustomed to trace with a sharp graver various designs on silver. They filled up the lines thus sketched, with sulphate of silver, so that the design was distinctly brought out in black, on the white surface of the metal. One day an artist, wishing to preserve a memorandum of his designs before filling up the lines with sulphate, placed on them a black fluid, over which he laid a piece of damp paper, and, on pressing it, the paper received a fac-simile of the work. The art of

multiplying engravings on paper was now discovered, but it does not appear that this art was much practised till 1467, when Baccio Baldini adopted it as his trade or profession, and led the way in that beautiful employment, by which the works of artists are now so extensively multiplied. Wood engraving is of earlier date, but was extremely rude and coarse in its commencement, in which state it long remained.

The great art of modern times, and the mightiest power in the civilization of mankind, is printing, which was invented in the fifteenth century. Block printing was known in the previous century, but this was employed in producing rude cuts of saints, and the figures which distinguish playing cards. Sentences were afterwards added to the cuts, of which we have a specimen in the *Biblia Pauperum*, or, Poor Man's Bible, produced in 1430; a very curious publication, a sort of connecting link between the old block impression of uncouth figures, and our own typography. It contains forty plates, with extracts referring to the pictures. The whole sentence was cut on one block. The idea of carving each letter distinct, and transposing the types, was hit upon about 1445. Costar, of Haerlem, and Guttenberg, of Mentz, are the rival claimants for the honour of originating that simple idea. We cannot enter on the controversy; perhaps each thought of the improvement without the knowledge of the other, and mankind may be indebted to

both. With that impression, we well remember some years ago lingering about Costar's old house in the quiet street of Haerlem one bright summer's afternoon, and then going up the Rhine to Mentz, to visit the birth-place of Guttenberg, musing much on the wondrous goodness and wisdom of Divine Providence in raising up these men to meet the want of the age ; by supplying a method for the perpetuation and multiplication of those manifold thoughts, literary, philosophical, and religious, which were springing up in so many minds, the heralds of a new intellectual era in the history of man. The invention of movable types in wood, though an important step, left the art imperfect. Metal was a far better material for the purpose ; this was adopted. Still probably they were at first only *cut*, a process which, to say nothing of the labour, could not secure perfect uniformity of size and form. The *casting* of types was the next step, and is generally ascribed to Peter Schœffer, about the year 1452.

The first book printed with a date is the Latin Psalter of 1457, of which there is a splendid copy in the royal library, Windsor ; but the Mazarin Bible, without date, claims priority of age, and has been referred to 1455, or 1452.

For twenty years after the discovery of the art, it was preserved a secret ; Fust and Schœffer being accustomed to administer to their workmen an oath of concealment. In the year

1462, at the sacking of Mentz, the printers were dispersed, the secret was divulged, and printing establishments were set up in divers parts of Europe. Our own Caxton began his employment in 1467, when in Burgundy, and established his printing press at Westminster in 1474. The closing passage of his first book, "The Recule of the Histories of Troyes," has been often quoted; but who that has read it a score times before, will not linger over it as he reads it now once again?—"Thus end I this book, which I have translated after my author as nigh as God hath given me cunning: to whom be given the laud and praising. And, forasmuch as in writing of the same, my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyes dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been; and that age creepeth on me daily, and feebleth all the body; and, also, because I have promised to certain gentlemen, and to my friends, to address to them, as hastily as I might, this book: therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge, to ordain this said book in print after the manner and form as you may here see. And it is not written with pens and ink, as other books be, to the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of this story thus imprinted, as ye here see, were begun in one day, and also finished in one day." Not, as Charles Knight observes, that the whole book was begun and finished in a single day,

but that all the copies of the impression were begun on the same day, and finished on the same day. That would seem marvellous enough to our forefathers.

A great number of books issued from the press in the fifteenth century. Three hundred were printed in Florence, six hundred and twenty-nine in Milan, two hundred and ninety-eight at Bologna, nine hundred and twenty-five at Rome, two thousand eight hundred and thirty-five at Venice. In France and Germany, too, the printers were busy. England, however, was in the rear. The whole number printed in this country, before the end of the fifteenth century, was only one hundred and forty-one. One hundred and thirty of these were printed at Westminster, chiefly by Caxton, seven at Oxford, four at St. Albans. According to Santander, fifteen thousand volumes were printed between the years 1470 and 1500. In the next century, the press poured forth torrents of books, matching the prolific supplies of the present day. It is said that twenty-four thousand copies of the Colloques of Erasmus were printed in 1527, in Paris.*

The press gave a wonderful impulse to the study of ancient literature, by quickly and cheaply multiplying copies of the classics; and it further gave a still more powerful impetus to the cause of the Reformation among the people, by widely scattering the writings of

* Bayle's Dictionary, Art. Erasmus. He mentions that a trick was played by the printer to increase the sale.

the reformers, and, especially, by pouring forth copies of the Bible in the vernacular tongues. The press was a voice which the papacy could not stifle. 'Tis true the papal hierarchy did not silently look on as the press advanced in its mighty labours. Berthold, archbishop of Mentz, in 1486, issued a mandate against what he considered a sad abuse of the new invention, which shows how early the Roman church evinced a jealousy of the press, when it saw the potent engine employed in the cause of religious reformation. Pope Alexander iv. issued, in 1501, a bull of a similar character, and the council of Lateran employed its influence in the same direction. But all was in vain. The mouths of John Huss and Jerome of Prague could be stopped; their voice could be choked in death, but the press had an immortal faculty of speech, which it was utterly impossible to silence, and which popes and councils found it very difficult even to fetter.

Such is an imperfect view of the Dawn of Modern Civilization. The shadows of the dark ages receded before the advancing light of better times. The ecclesiastical despotism, under which Europe had so long groaned, was undermined and shaken, preparatory to the decisive blow given by the Reformation. Feudalism, long the main element in secular society, melted away before the growing power of commerce, the rise of towns and cities, and

the development of republican and monarchical forms of government. The progress of European society, however, was not what the trite metaphor of the dawn of civilization might indicate, universal and steady, but, as we have shown, partial and irregular. To make the metaphor correspond with the facts of history, we must imagine the morning light gleaming from different points in the eastern sky, while now and then some clouds, drifted over the horizon, partially obscured its radiance.

No religious mind can contemplate this revival of civilization, any more than he can contemplate the rising sun, without being convinced that its light has been kindled by the hand of God. Evidence of wise and benevolent design may be traced in providence, as well as in creation. In the time, order, and bearing, of events, there are proofs of an overruling power, adapting means to a certain end, as clear as those which may be recognised in the facts of physical nature. Again and again have we felt, while sketching the above outline of events, "This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." He has not forsaken the world which he formed: he leaves it not in a state of orphanhood: he suffers it not to be the sport of chance; but with paternal care regulates its destinies, with a father's love promotes its welfare. The lines of human history are all in his hands. Many of them are too fine, intricate,

and complicated, for us to trace their connexion and follow them up to their origin : but others of them are so prominent and plain, that we can easily discern their dependence on the great presiding Power which holds them in his grasp. Infinitely glorious must be that Mind which comprehends and arranges the whole scheme of providence ; and what manifestations will be made of his wisdom and goodness when the work is finished, and the fabric now woven by his hand shall be taken off the loom of time, and its texture, pattern, and colours shall be seen in the light of eternity !

In the state of society during the fifteenth century, various secondary causes may be detected preparing for the glorious Reformation ; but let not these so absorb attention, as to exclude a devout acknowledgment of the more immediate interposition of the Divine Being in the accomplishment of that great change. In Luther and others of the band of reformers, we recognise men sent by God into the world to fulfil a special mission, and fitted by him for the task. Preparatory events were as the wood and stubble ; the reformers were as the lightning sent from heaven to kindle them into a blaze. The previous arrangements were needful ; but the men who took advantage of these were equally needful. Nor were the preparatory train of events and the men together, the only agencies engaged in bringing about the spiritual part of the revolution.

Believing in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence in all ages of the church, and in the necessity of its exercise for all that is truly holy in our world, we believe that, so far as the revival of pure religion at that time was concerned, it was the effect of an enlarged pouring out of the grace of God. The restoration of literature, the inventions of art, the discoveries of science, the activity of the human mind, and the heroism of Luther, might have roused the church, but could not have spiritually renovated it. The same Divine Agent, who secured the first triumphs of Christianity, was needed now for the revival of its primitive power. It is unphilosophical in the Christian to pass over this cause, in estimating the antecedents of the Reformation. We would devoutly remember that the Spirit was poured out from on high. Clouds fraught with Divine influence sailed over Europe. The skirts of them reached to Italy and Spain: but the richest showers fell on the plains of Germany, the vales of Switzerland, and the fields of Britain. Happy land, on which they so copiously descended! Glorious harvests have been already reaped: the precious grain is still springing up amidst her hills and valleys. May God in mercy preserve it from the withering blight and the devouring bird!



