THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POPULAR EDUCATION.

THE work the Catholic Church is doing in our day and country in the effort to foster and promote Christian education is plain to the world. In spite of obstacles and difficulties—in the face of legislation that everywhere operates unfairly against her, and of a public opinion that is either hostile or indifferent, the Catholic Church steadily demonstrates her zeal for education by establishing and multiplying schools and institutions of learning, in order to afford in every parish and to every community the blessed advantages of a system of education from which *God* will not be excluded, and where Catholic youth shall receive a thoroughly Christian training.

In this beneficent and heroic work the Church shows that she is faithful to the traditions of her venerable past.

Her zeal for schools and generous patronage of science and learning is not a new manifestation. The fact is as old as the Church itself, and shines out in glorious prominence on every page of Catholic history in every land; during the earliest ages, as in later times, down even to the present day.

It may not be regarded as a useless task to devote a few pages to the duty of showing precisely what has been the attitude of the Catholic Church regarding this question of common schools and popular education; and it may be not altogether in vain to seek to demonstrate that, far from opposing the wide dissemination of knowledge, the Church has been the steady and consistent friend and patron of science and learning. And not, as is sometimes asserted, in favor of the few,—seeking to confine its advantages to a special class, or classes,—but rather has labored from the beginning to extend and enlarge the opportunities of education so as to bring its blessings and advantages within reach of *all* her children, even to the humblest degree and the lowliest condition.

The unjust outcry raised against the Church on this head proceeds, it is true, from the shallow-minded and the ignorant, the weak partisan and the intolerant bigot; but this class, unhappily, are too often the sonorous oracles of Protestant pulpits, glib declaimers in the popular lyceum, and, more dangerous opportunity still, are to be found in the highest places, as in all the gradations of popular journalism.

Indeed it is scarcely extravagant to assert that no charge and reproach against the Catholic Church is more familiar to the public ear, and no other is pressed with greater vigor and pertinacity than

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this ridiculous and unfounded charge, that she is, or at all events *has been* hostile to popular education, unfriendly to common schools, and opposed to the enlightenment of the masses of the people. "Wherever that Church has been able to wield power and to employ her resources unfettered," say these hostile critics, "she has shown herself hostile to education; has everywhere sought to cramp and fetter the mental powers and the intellectual activity of her subjects—in a word has been a bar and an obstacle to the mental as well as to the social and political advancement of peoples and nations."

Nor is this language confined to avowed enemies of the Church; it is the familiar burden of the so-called philosophies and popular histories and text-books; it is repeated *ad nauseam* in well-known educational organs, and it is the favorite and fruitful theme for the essayist and the encyclopædist. How often do we not see quoted, as in triumphant and conclusive testimony of the justice of these allegations, "priest-ridden Italy," "benighted, retrograding Spain," and "poor, ignorant, Catholic Ireland?"

We shall now proceed to examine these inculpatory charges, and endeavor to show how altogether shallow and unsubstantial is the basis they rest on.

It will be shown that, from the earliest period in the history of Christianity down through every succeeding age, the Catholic Church has been unceasingly solicitous to foster and promote education. It will be made manifest in the countless schools established by her authority and under her patronage; and by her constant and unremitting efforts to encourage and propagate a general zeal in the cause of science and knowledge; and this zeal moreover was not merely in favor of schools for the wealthy, for ecclesiastics, but specially and notably shown in providing schools for the poor, *free schools.*

There is a more or less generally widespread impression and belief that the existing system of free schools is of comparatively modern origin, and the claim has been put forward that New England is entitled to the glory and credit of having first instituted the system, which has since been so widely disseminated.

We shall see that free schools existed far back in what are ignorantly stigmatized as the "dark ages," and that traces of their existence will be found even in the first ages of Christianity. Facts are not wanting to show that Ireland may justly lay claim to the honor of having been almost the first among the nations of Europe in zeal for education and learning.

Historians now acknowledge that the schools of Ireland were not only *free*, that is, education was given *gratis* in the Irish schools to all, but even books, food and lodging were supplied to students

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who sought her shores from the neighboring islands, and the continent, but, Ireland went a step further—and here is a shining fact which, we may venture to assert, is unexampled in the laws or history of any nation,—*the masters of Irish ships were bound to give free passage to those who sought to find in the schools of that island masters in the sciences and sources of knowledge which could nowhere else in that age be found in Europe!*

This is a subject and period, however, which more naturally will present itself in illustration at a subsequent page of this sketch.

In the earliest ages of Christianity, that is to say, between the first and second centuries, we read of the *Catechetical schools* founded by the bishops in Alexandria (the same that was lately the focus of public attention), Cæsarea, Antioch, and Rome. The letters and epistles of the first Popes and Bishops abound in exhortations and instructions to the heads of churches and to the faithful to promote in every way the establishment of schools for the education of Christian youth.

In one respect at least there is a curious and suggestive affinity between the pagan system of education in the time of the Cæsars, and the modern State methods—instance the design of *Julian the Apostate*, who endeavored by means of "unfriendly legislation" to suppress in the schools all Christian teaching. He forbade the Christians to have schools of their own. "If the Christians fancy," said the Emperor in one of his outbursts of fury, "that the sentiments of the pagan authors are derogatory to the majesty of their Gods, then let these Galileans be content to explain Matthew and Luke in their churches." A declaration like this does not sound altogether strange and unfamiliar to the modern ear. Have we not somewhere and sometimes heard that "six days in the week should be given in the schools to secular knowledge—one day is enough for God!" Six days for the science of the world, the multiplication table, and only one day for the Commandments, for God, and Eternity! The writings of the early Fathers, and the annals of the primitive Church abundantly testify to the zeal for education shown in those early ages; the proofs would cumber these pages with quotations; indeed, as to the early Church our proposition would not be seriously controverted.

It would be admitted by some that the zeal for schools grew naturally out of the development from Roman and Grecian civilization, and the already existing enthusiasm for knowledge; while others would acknowledge it as due to the influence of the "purer Christianity" of the Church of the first ages. We shall see.

The wonderful civilizing and educational mission of the Church

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was never more conspicuous than when that same Roman civilization and power was tottering to its ruin, when barbarian hordes thundered at the gates of the imperial city, and the empire and even civilization itself, as then existing, seemed doomed to destruction—utter and complete. Europe was then one vast camp of aroused and vindictive barbarians bent on a destroying, desolating career. The imperial legions had failed to stay their march, the walls of proud Rome could not withstand their assault.

It was this awful power that the Church was to confront, to awe, to conquer, and, more difficult task still, to *civilize*, to *educate*. These barbarous hordes had shown themselves intractable to every humanizing influence. The material grandeur of the world's famous capital moved them not; its majestic monuments excited no wonder; its magnificent architecture inspired no awe; its exquisite creations of art stirred no sensibility. All these would have perished by their destructive arm and pitiless torch, but for the intervention of the benignant power of religion. The Popes saved Rome from the terrible wrath of the *Hun* and the vengeance of the Vandal and the Goth. They rescued society; they preserved civilization. "But for that intervention," says a writer in the *Dublin Review*, "Rome at this moment would be numbered with Nineveh and Sidon, the foxes would bark upon the Aventine as when Belisarius rode through the deserted forum, and shepherds would fold their flocks upon the hills where St. Peter's and St. John Lateran now dazzle the eye with splendor."

This may seem to be a digression from the subject, but it serves to bring out and emphasize the great, nay the stupendous task subsequently undertaken by the Church in setting herself to the duty of moulding and directing the new civilization.

If, at the present day, we may point to the restraining and civilizing power of the school and the influence of educational training and methods, surely we may be permitted to refer to the mighty task undertaken by the Catholic Church, when a Pope awed by his majesty and turned back by his entreaties and threats, a barbarian army from the gates of the imperial city; and still more the wonderful and striking change which was wrought over these same savages and their successors under the benign power and the educating influence of the Roman Pontiff.

One after another the Popes eagerly entered into the work of establishing schools and providing for the education and the moral improvement of the people. Gregory the Great was conspicuously the patron of schools. He founded and endowed a great number of schools for the instruction of the poor, and recommended to the Bishops in distant countries to provide similar institutions in their respective dioceses. He was also the originator of *singing schools*,

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and we owe to his influence and good taste the ecclesiastical music known as the "Gregorian," which remains to this day the standard sacred music of the Church.

Spain, in the sixth century, had its Cathedral schools in every diocese; and it was provided in the Council of Toledo in that century, that "all children offered by their parents should be brought together under one roof and be instructed under the superintendence of the Bishop." So likewise in France. Thus, in the year 800, the Council of Orleans urged on the parish priests the duty of "establishing schools in every town and village, *and of giving gratuitous instruction to all children.*" Surely these were essentially *free schools?* In 813 the Council of Mayence directed the clergy to "admonish their parishioners to send their children to the monastic and parochial schools;" and like injunctions were issued by Councils held in Rheims, Tours, and other episcopal centres at nearly the same period.

That of Romain, 826, enforced on Bishops the obligation to "found episcopal seminaries in the cities, and parochial schools in all towns and villages where the necessity existed." Leo IV. in the ninth century commanded the Bishops to provide for the erection of schools, and required that they should give a statement of their quality and efficiency in the provincial synods. The third Council of Lateran laid down, in one of its decrees, that "since the Church of God is bound as a pious mother to provide that every opportunity for learning should be afforded to the poor, who are without help from patrimonial riches, in every Cathedral there should be masters to teach both clerks and poor scholars *gratis.*" This injunction was extended to other churches by Innocent III., who required that "each should be provided with the means to furnish gratuitous instruction." Thus we again stumble across "free schools," and in the "dark ages" too!

The memorable reign of Charlemagne abounds in proofs and illustrations demonstrating the zeal of this great Catholic monarch for schools and the promotion of learning. We may read in the *Capitularies* his commands and advice to the Bishops throughout the empire urging them to establish schools for the poor, and to second his efforts to promote the spread of knowledge and learning. Guizot and other historians relate how Charlemagne sought in Ireland and brought from that country masters of science and philosophy to adorn his court and teach in his colleges.

In A. D. 823, Lotharius, the grandson of Charlemagne, published an edict for the creation of schools, and in the preface to it says: "Let the masters appointed by us to teach, take care that their scholars attend to their instructions and make that proficiency which the times demand."

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"With this view," he adds, "and in order that neither distance of place, nor distance of circumstances be an excuse to any, we have fixed on such cities as will be found most generally convenient."

He then proceeds to name the cities, which are nine (in Italy), and at the same time specified the subordinate towns in the vicinity of each, the youth of which are to repair to the above schools. At the head of the list stands Pavia, afterwards famous for its great University.

Pope Eugenius II., in a decree published the same year, commands that "care be taken that wherever necessity shall appear teachers shall be appointed, who shall assiduously give instructions on the study of letters and the liberal arts, as also on the holy doctrines of religion."

Referring to an earlier period, Mosheim, the ecclesiastical historian, observes:

"From this time, the Christians applied themselves with more zeal and diligence to the study of philosophy and the liberal arts. The Emperors encouraged this taste for learning and left no means unemployed to excite and maintain a spirit of literary emulation among the professors of Christianity. For this purpose schools were establishad in many cities. Libraries were also erected and men of learning and genius were nobly recompensed by the honors and advantages that were attached to the culture of the sciences and arts." Another writer, Berington, in his "Literary History of the Middle Ages," remarks: "When we turn back to the studies of these men and view the schools which they frequented, the cities which they illustrated by their lectures, the countries through which they travelled in quest of science, the numerous works which proceeded from their pens, the general ardor by which all their pursuits were animated, and which seemed only to relax as the current of life ceased to flow, we shall learn that the Christians of this period were not negligent of the various branches of science; that literature was indebted to their exertions."

The missionaries who accompanied St. Augustine to England, as well as those who had preceded them from Ireland, were the first to diffuse a taste for learning and literature in that country. It is related that "Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 668 founded and endowed many schools in England, from which a great number of classical scholars came forth in succeeding ages."

Dr. Collier, a Protestant writer, in his ecclesiastical history, acknowledges that "when the monks were established in England they promoted a general improvement and were very industrious in restoring learning." The great eagerness for the establishment of

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schools and for the general education of his people shown by King Alfred the Great, is a subject familiar to every school-boy.

In 1138, the Council of Westminster prohibited the scholastics from exacting payment for the licenses granted to schoolmasters in the towns and villages.

The tenor and spirit of ecclesiastical law and counsel in these ages may be embodied in two significant words and commands, "*Preach*" and "*Teach.*"

" From the earliest centuries," says a writer in the *Contemporary Review*, " it had been a practice with the Christian Church in newly converted countries to erect schools by the side of cathedrals."

The personal history and career of the Popes afford interesting testimony to the educational advantages placed by the Church within the reach of all her children. Many of the most illustrious of the rulers of the Church rose to the Pontifical chair from the humblest ranks and the lowliest employments. The royal road was that of piety and learning.

Sylvester II. was the son of a poor peasant who dwelt in the mountains of Auvergne. Adrian IV., the only English Pope, was the son of a menial employed in the Abbey of St. Albans. Urban IV. was the son of a shoemaker. Nicholas IV. was of an obscure family, and like those already named owed his education to the Benedictines. Benedict XI. was the son of a notary. John XXII. of a shoemaker. Benedict XII. of a miller. Nicholas V., of whom Macaulay said: " Every friend of science should name him with respect," was the son of a physician. " Should I ever possess riches," Nicholas V. had often repeated when he was indigent, " I would expend them in building and in the purchase of books."

Sixtus V. was the son of a peasant of Montalto. The list might be largely extended, but these instances are sufficient for the purpose. " Not one of the august dynasty," testifies a writer in the *Dublin Review*, " has lost sight of the interests of society and the prerogatives of mind; and even in the few instances where they failed in good personally, they encouraged in their official capacity whatsoever things are true and of good name."

The universities founded by the Church constitute a magnificent testimony to her generous patronage of learning. The pages of Hallam, Guizot, Gibbon, Sismondi, Macaulay, Milman, and of many other leading historians, furnish copious and striking admissions and tributes to the number and grandeur of these institutions.

Spain was scarcely emancipated from the Moorish dominion and thraldom when she could boast of possessing *twenty-seven* universities. To name the cities of Salamanca, Valladolid, and Alcala, is to recall the great universities to which these cities chiefly owe

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their fame. The celebrity attained by the Universities of Paris, Bologna, Prague, and Padua, and the learning and renown of their professors and scholars, have been the theme of many an eloquent tribute from the pens of historians and essayists.

The origin of the famous English Universities of Oxford and Cambridge is well known, and affords another striking example of the zeal of the Catholic Church to promote higher education. In a speech delivered in the British Parliament bearing on the question of a proposed grant in aid of the Irish College of Maynooth, Macaulay, who warmly supported the grant, thus eloquently acknowledges the Catholic origin and splendid munificence with which these famous universities were endowed in Catholic ages by Catholic kings, queens and bishops:

"When I consider with what magnificence religion and science are endowed in our universities, when I call to mind their long streets of palaces, their trim gardens, their chapels with organs, altar-pieces, and stained windows; when I remember their schools, libraries and galleries of art; when I remember, too, all the solid comforts provided in those places both for instructors and pupils, the stately dwellings of the principals, the commodious apartments of the fellows and scholars; when I remember that the very sizars and servitors are lodged far better than you propose to lodge those priests who are to teach the whole people of Ireland; when I think of the halls, the common rooms, the bowling greens, even the stabling of Oxford and Cambridge—the display of old plate on the tables, the good cheer of the kitchen, the oceans of excellent ale in the buttery, and when I remember from whom all this splendor and plenty are derived; when I remember the faith of Edward III. and Henry VI., of Margaret of Anjou, and Margaret of Richmond, of William of Wykeham, of Archbishop Chichely and Cardinal Wolsey; when I remember what we have taken from the Roman Catholic religion, King's College, New College, my own Trinity College and Christ's Church—and when I look at the miserable Dotheboys Hall we have given them in return—I ask myself if we, and if the Protestant religion, are not disgraced by the comparison?"

These universities are justly the pride of England and the boast and glory of Englishmen; but England may thank and ought forever to hold in enduring remembrance the Catholic founders and benefactors who established and endowed these institutions of learning with a munificence so splendid and enduring.

The attendance or muster roll of students at the English and Continental Universities is another stumbling-block to those who arraign the Church as having been "hostile to education," and demonstrates, moreover, the malicious wantonness of the sneers

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and gibes at the "dark ages." In the University of Prague, at the commencement of the 15th century, there were no less than 40,000 students in attendance. The University of Paris is said to have included, during the 12th century, fully one-half the population of the city. In the 13th century Bologna educated 10,000 students in her University, and in the next century the number had increased to 13,000. The figures given as to other European Universities are equally great and amazing. Oxford, in the 14th century, contained no less than 300 colleges and halls, and the number of students is estimated by several writers at no less than 30,000! Though we cannot for obvious reasons go back to the middle ages to show what the Catholic Church did in America for education, we can at all events go back 250 years and point with just pride to the fact that the Catholic Church *founded the first College and established the first University on the American Continent!* It will not be disputed that the *Lavalle University* founded by the Jesuits in Quebec, still in flourishing existence, though under other auspices and management, can claim priority by several years over Cambridge, the oldest college in the United States.

Irish writers refer with justifiable exultation to the Irish schools that flourished in the island during the period immediately following the conversion of the Irish by St. Patrick down to, say, the 11th century, and even English and Continental writers who have studied the subject are scarcely less enthusiastic in alluding to it. "Within a century after the death of St. Patrick," writes Bishop Nicholson, a Protestant authority, "the Irish Seminaries had so increased that most parts of Europe sent their children to be educated there, and drew thence their bishops and teachers."

The *Venerable Bede* testifies to the remarkable and distinguished position held by the Irish in the fifth century, and refers to the multitude of churches and monasteries which existed in the island, and the fame which the Irish schools had even then acquired. Alluding to the ninth century Bede says: "No less than seven thousand students frequented the schools of Armagh alone." The English historian, Camden, remarks how common a thing it is to read in the lives of the English saints that they were "sent to study in Ireland."

Even as late as the eleventh century, Sulgenus, Bishop of St. Davids, is said to have spent ten years studying in the Irish schools, which were then as famous as ever.

Another English writer says: "Whatever exaggeration may have been committed by the national annalists, when they speak of the foreign students who resorted to the Irish schools, it is impossible to doubt that they were eagerly sought by people of

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the most distant lands, who, in an age when the rest of Europe was sunk in illiterate barbarism, found in the cloisters of Armagh, Lismore, Clonard, and Clonmacnois, masters of philosophy and sacred science, whose learning had passed into a proverb." Thebaud, in his learned and philosophic work on the *Irish Race*, gives a remarkable enumeration of the monasteries established by the Irish missionaries all over the continent of Europe; and Professor Lecky pays a tribute to the ancient renown of Ireland as the nursery of Christian faith and the focus of European civilization. "I leave it," he says, "to professed antiquarians to discover how far the measure of civilization, which had undoubtedly been attained in Ireland before the English invasion, extended beyond the walls of the monasteries. That civilization enabled Ireland to bear a great and noble part in the conversion of Europe to Christianity. It made it, in one of the darkest periods of the dark ages, a refuge of piety and learning. England owed a great part of her Christianity to the Irish monks who labored among her people before the arrival of Augustine; and Scotland, according to the best authorities, owed her name, her language, and a large part of her population to the long succession of Irish immigrations and conquests between the close of the fifth and the ninth centuries."

The resources in further illustration of this glorious period of Irish history are abundant and readily accessible, and especially as demonstrating the high rank and extended fame of the Irish schools and scholars; but the limit assigned to a single article will not admit of more extended quotations in confirmation.

There is, however, one writer, whose eloquent and enthusiastic testimony to the Irish monks and scholars it would scarcely be pardonable to omit in treating of this subject, the brilliant and erudite Montalembert. "It has been said, and cannot be sufficiently repeated," he says, in a remarkable chapter in his *Monks of the West*, "that Ireland was then regarded by all Christian Europe as the principal centre of knowledge and piety. In the shelter of her numberless monasteries a crowd of missionaries, doctors, and preachers were educated for the service of the Church and the propagation of the faith in all Christian countries. A vast and continuous development of literary and religious effort is there apparent superior to anything that could be seen in any other country in Europe. Certain arts were successfully cultivated. The classic languages, not only Latin, but Greek, were cultivated, spoken, and written, with a sort of passionate pedantry which shows at least how powerful was the sway of intellectual influence over these ardent souls. Their mania for Greek was carried so far that they wrote the Latin of the Church in Hellenic characters.

"And in Ireland, more than anywhere else, each monastery was

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a school, and each school a workshop of transcription, from which day by day issued new copies of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the primitive Church, copies which were dispersed through all Europe, and which are still to be found in the Continental libraries. They may easily be recognized by the original and elegant character of their Irish writing, as also by the use of the alphabet common to all the Celtic races, and afterwards employed by the Anglo-Saxons, but to which in our own day the Irish alone have remained faithful.

"Columbkille had given an example of this unwearied labor to the monastic scribes. His example was continually followed in the Irish cloisters, where the monks did not merely limit themselves to the transcription of the Holy Scriptures, but reproduced also Greek and Latin authors, sometimes in Celtic character, with gloss and commentary in Irish, like that *Horace* which modern learning has discovered in the library of Berne. These marvellous MSS., illuminated with incomparable ability and patience, excited five hundred years later the declamatory enthusiasm of the great enemy of Ireland, the Anglo-Norman, Gerald De Barry, and still attracts the attention of archæologists and philologists of the highest fame."

In another chapter in the same work the eloquent Frenchman says:

"Still more striking than the intellectual development of which the Irish monasteries were at the time the centre, is the prodigious activity displayed by the Irish monks in extending and multiplying themselves over all the countries of Europe;—here to create new schools and sanctuaries among nations already evangelized,—there to carry the light of the gospel at the peril of their lives to countries that were still pagan.

"The monasteries which gradually covered the soil of Ireland were the hostelries of a foreign emigration. Unlike the ancient Druidical colleges they were open to all, the poor and the rich, the slave as well as the freeman, the child and the old man had free access and paid nothing. It was not then only to the natives of Ireland that the Irish monasteries confined the benefit of their knowledge, and of literary and religious education.

"They opened their doors with admirable generosity to strangers of every country and of every condition; above all to those who came from the neighboring island, England, some to end their lives in an Irish cloister, some to go from house to house in search of books, and masters capable of explaining those books.

"The Irish monks received with kindness guests so greedy of instruction, and gave them both books and masters—the food of the body and the food of the soul without demanding any recom-

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pense. The Anglo-Saxons, who were afterwards to repay this teaching with ingratitude so cruel, were of all nations the one which derived the most profit from it.

"From the seventh to the eleventh centuries English students flocked into Ireland, and for four hundred years the monastic schools of the island maintained the great reputation which brought so many successive generations to dip deeply there into the living waters of knowledge and faith."

Here then we have the irrefutable testimony to the fact that when Ireland was most devotedly Catholic, she was at the same time the most renowned as an educational centre. Ireland then possessed great schools, and scholars worthy of her schools.

Learning perished in Ireland only when civil wars had scourged and foreign invasions had ravaged and desolated the island.

It was the destructive sword and the devastating torch of the *Northmen* in repeated raids that swept away and ravaged in ruthless succession church, monastery, and school, and paralyzed the energies which would have restored them; and the vandalism and iron rule of the English invader completed their extinction. Since then we know how effectually penal laws and proscriptive measures supplemented the wrathful work commenced by the destroying Dane, and continued and completed by their Norman and English successors.

When we come to the period of the important discovery of the art of printing we are again reminded how unworthily a false outcry against the Church obtains credit and currency before the public. It might be inferred from all that has been said and written on the subject—nay, it is sometimes boldly charged that the Catholic Church contrived in some occult way or manner to prevent and retard this valuable discovery. It is true, though the fact is conveniently ignored or skipped over, that the art of printing was discovered and in use nearly one hundred years before the period of the so-called "Reformation;" and the Catholic Church was prompt to utilize its services and to encourage and promote its use.

It was the Popes who assisted the first printers, the workmen of Faust and Schaeffer, on their removal to Rome. The first printing press set up in Paris was at the *Sorbonne.* The first to patronize printing in England was Thomas Milling, Archbishop of Westminster, in which Abbey Caxton established his printing office.

The earliest printing done in Italy was at the monastery of St. Scholastica Subiaco, the productions of which are sought after by bibliopolists and antiquarians on account of the remarkable beauty of the printing.

In 1474 the Augustinian monks printed books at their monas-

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tery in Rhingau. In 1480 a printing press was set up in the English Abbey of St. Albans, and another in the Abbey of Tavistock.

The dates of the early printed editions of the Bible demonstrate the absurdity of the claim put forward by Protestant writers that the "Reformers" were the first to translate the Sacred Scriptures and render them accessible to Christian readers.

Lying books, coarse cartoons and vulgar pictures are made the convenient medium to slander and calumniate the monks of the middle ages, whose lives have been maliciously distorted, and whose works are almost uniformly belittled and ridiculed.

Lazy monks, forsooth! We are indebted to the Catholic Church and to the zeal and industry of the monks of the middle ages for all that we possess of ancient and classic literature, and, of course, also for the preservation and multiplication of the Holy Scriptures. These greatly maligned men were the teachers and schoolmasters of their time; they were the artists, authors, architects, agriculturists, builders, colonizers, scientists, and inventors in every age and country. "These monks," says Frederic Ozanam, "who spent six hours in the choir, transcribed in their cells the histories and even the poets of Greece and Rome, and bequeathed to the middle ages the most valuable writings of antiquity."

Trace most of the famous discoveries and inventions of the middle ages, and even in the later times, and we shall most likely find that they were due to the genius and the industry of the "lazy monk." The monks were pioneers even in the principles that lie at the foundation of our modern popular free governments.

The essential and vital doctrines and maxims in the American Constitution and "Declaration of Independence," may be found embodied in the Constitution of the Benedictine and other religious orders.

The vaunted rights and liberties which have been transmitted through the English Common Law, if traced back to the source from which they emanated, will be found almost invariably to have been inspired or placed there by the forgotten monks.

The palladium of English liberty, the vaunted *Magna Charta*, was the achievement and work of a Catholic bishop.

"But for the monks of the middle ages," says Mrs. Jameson, "the light of liberty, literature, and science had been forever extinguished; and for six centuries there existed for the thoughtful, the gentle, the inquiring, the devout spirit, no peace, no security, no home, but the cloister.

"There learning trimmed her lamp; there contemplation 'preened her wings;' there the traditions of art, preserved from age to age by lonely, studious men, kept alive in form and color the idea of a beauty beyond that of earth—of a might beyond that of the spear

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and shield, of a divine sympathy with suffering humanity. To this we may add another and a stronger claim to our respect and moral sympathy,—the protection and the better education given to woman in those early communities; the venerable and distinguished rank assigned to them, when as governesses of orders they became in a manner dignitaries of the Church; the introduction of their beautiful and saintly effigies, clothed with all the insignia of sanctity and authority, into the decoration of places of worship and books of devotion, did more, perhaps, for the general cause of womanhood than all the boasted institutions of chivalry."

"Every monastery," says Mr. Lecky in his *History of European Rationalism*, "became a centre from which charity radiated. By the monks the nobles were overawed, the poor protected, the sick tended, travellers sheltered, prisoners ransomed, the remotest spheres of suffering explored." "The Catholic Church," writes Mr. Emerson, "had been for centuries the democratic principle in Europe," and "Christianity lived by the love of the people."

An English writer, O'Dell T. Hill, in a notable work, *English Monasticism*, pp. 514–15, pays the following tribute to the monks:

"But far away from the Castle there arose another building; massive, solid, and strong, not frowning with battlemented towers, nor isolated by broad moats, but with open gates and a hearty welcome to all comers, stood the Monastery, where lay the hope of humanity as in a safe asylum. Behind its walls was the church, and clustered around it the dwelling-places of those who had left the world, and devoted their lives to the service of that Church, and the salvation of their souls.

"Far and near in its vicinity the land bore witness to assiduous culture and diligent care, bearing on its fertile bosom the harvest hope of those who had labored, which the heavens watered, the sun smiled upon, and the winds played over, until the heart of man rejoiced, and all nature was big with promise of increase.

"This was the refuge to which religion and art had fled. In the quiet seclusion of its cloisters, science labored at its problems and perpetuated its results, uncheered by applause, and stimulated only by the pure love of the pursuit. Art toiled in the Church, and whole generations of busy fingers worked patiently at the decoration of the temple of the Most High.

"The pale, thoughtful monk, upon whose brow genius had set her mark, wandered into the calm retirement of the library, threw back his cowl, buried himself in the study of philosophy, history, or divinity, and transferred his thoughts to vellum, which was to moulder and waste in darkness and obscurity, like himself in his lonely monk's grave, and be read only when the spot where he

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labored should be a heap of ruins, and his very name a controversy amongst scholars.

"We should never lose sight of the truth, that in this building, when the world was given up to violence and darkness, was garnered the hope of humanity; and these men who dwelt there in contemplation and obscurity were its faithful guardians; and this was more particularly the case with that great Order to which Glastonbury belonged.

"The Benedictines were the depositaries of learning and the arts; they gathered books together, and reproduced them in the silence of their cells, and they preserved in this way not only the volumes of Sacred Writ, but many of the works of classic lore. They started Gothic architecture—that matchless union of nature with art; they alone had the secrets of chemistry and medical science; they invented many colors; they were the first architects, artists, glass-stainers, carvers and mosaic workers in mediæval times. They were the original illuminators of manuscripts, and the first transcribers of books; in fine, they were the writers, thinkers, and workers of a dark age, who wrote for no applause, thought with no encouragement, and worked for no reward.

"Their power, too, waxed mighty; kings trembled before their denunciations of tyranny, and in the hour of danger fled to their altars for safety; and it was an English king who made a pilgrimage to their shrines, and prostrate at the feet of five Benedictine monks, bared his back, and submitted himself to be scourged as a panacea for his crimes."

As in the case of the public schools, we have seen it more than once gravely stated that "Public Libraries" originated in the United States, and it has been seriously asserted that the first free circulating library was established in New England within this century?

Public libraries were in existence prior to the discovery of America by Columbus, long before the *Pilgrim Fathers* landed at Plymouth, and flourished centuries before the invention of printing!

The innumerable monastic libraries of the middle ages, and the general use made of them, may be cited as satisfactory, if not conclusive testimony on this point.

Students and scholars were not only given free access to the books, they were likewise permitted to carry the books away for use and study at home.

When in several abbeys in France the practice of loaning books had been discontinued, probably on account of the abuse made of the privilege, the Council of Paris, held in 1212, ordered the resumption of what was declared to be an "ancient custom," adding

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that, "the lending of books may be regarded as among the most eminent works of mercy."

Modern critics remark that the great number of books published in the middle ages establishes the assurance of a great multitude of readers, and Schlegel asserts that "from the time of Charlemagne, MSS. were multiplied in Europe with more profusion than they had been in the most polished times of antiquity, so that the writings of Greece and Rome were studied in remote and desolate regions, to which, if it had not been for the efforts of the Church to promote learning, their fame would have never reached."

When we consider how tedious was the task involved in transcribing and copying, and the labor and industry involved in the multiplication of books and manuscripts, as well as the extraordinary patience and ingenuity required to produce even a single book; and when we take into account the prodigious number that were thus produced for the use of the churches, monasteries, universities, and the libraries of Europe, we cannot but marvel at the extent and magnitude of the labor performed by the patient and intelligent scribes of the middle ages—the "lazy monks." In spite of all the causes and agencies that have conspired to promote the destruction of these fragile and perishable treasures, how vast is the accumulation of ancient books and writings still preserved to us in their original form and beauty!

There are upwards of 80,000 MSS. in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris; 100,000 in the library of the British Museum; 20,000 in the Royal Library, Munich; 30,000 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; 25,000 in the Vatican Library; besides the innumerable great collections in the various monasteries and the public and private libraries in Italy and throughout the continent. An account lately appeared in the public journals, of the discovery of an extensive collection of valuable Irish MSS. brought to light in the Royal Library, Copenhagen, not improbably part of the spoil carried away from Ireland by the Danish invaders! The ravages and destruction caused by civil wars and invasions during which, unhappily, the monastery and the school were too often the special objects of destructive vengeance, would account in part for the loss of many valuable collections of books; and when to this cause we add the losses by fire, natural decay, and other like agencies, we may well marvel that so many of these literary treasures are preserved to our day. The most fatal and destructive agency of all, undoubtedly, was the suppression of the religious orders and the confiscation of the monasteries and convents, where these literary treasures of the middle ages were chiefly collected and preserved.

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An incredible number of MSS. and books were destroyed in England.

"Whole libraries," says a writer, "were made waste paper of, or consumed for the vilest uses."

The splendid Abbey of Malmesbury, which possessed some of the finest MSS. in the kingdom, was "ransacked, and its treasures either burnt or sold to serve the commonest purposes of life."

"One, among the misfortunes consequent upon the suppression of the monasteries," says Dr. Collier, "was an ignorant destruction of many valuable books; many noble libraries were destroyed, to a great public scandal, and an irreparable loss to learning." Bale, Bishop of Ossory, although an enemy to the monks, lamented with the sorrow of a scholar the destruction of the English libraries caused by the wanton ignorance of the "Reformed" Commissioners. There would have been less occasion for reproach, he says, in his quaint old English, "*if only there had been in every shrine of England but one Solemne lybrary to the preservacyon of those noble works . . . . but to destroye all without consideracyon is and wyll be unto England for ever a most horrible infamy among the grave senyors of other nations.*"

Another writer mourns that the rarest books and the most precious MSS. were often turned to the vilest uses; the jewels and clasps torn off, whilst the books themselves were sold for waste paper; servants employed them to scour candlesticks, and even to rub their boots, and we are told of a tradesman who bought the contents of two noble libraries for "40 shillings," and had been using them for nearly two years for waste paper, and "had enough yet left to last him many years more."

The number and variety of the religious orders and congregations in the Catholic Church devoted to the duty of teaching in colleges, seminaries, and schools in every part of the world, constitutes, perhaps, the most striking evidence of the zeal and solicitude of the Church to promote and foster education, and to provide in the most effective manner for the training of her children. The efficiency and superior qualifications of these *religious* are universally acknowledged.

No parallel can be found for the self-devotedness of the members of these innumerable communities of men and women who consecrate their lives and their talents to this exalted mission. They supply learned Jesuits as professors for universities and colleges in the domain of higher studies; pious and talented Christian brothers for the parochial schools; and accomplished and elegantly trained nuns for the academies and female schools.

This subject alone would afford abundant material for an independent sketch, and cannot without injustice be considered in the

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course of the present notice. We may be permitted to thus scantily refer to it in passing as suggesting and illustrating the resources of the Church, and her deep appreciation of the importance of providing for the educational wants of the young.

The Catholic Church has been from the beginning the earnest, constant and devoted foster mother of education; the patron of schools and colleges; the creator of libraries, the consistent friend of science and learning. These facts may be traced in her early history, they appear in the lives of her Pontiffs and Bishops; in the decrees of Councils and Synods; in the laws and enactments of Catholic kings and parliaments; in the zeal and services of the religious orders, and by the concurring testimony of truthful history. They are demonstrated in the schools established through her encouragement, and in the colleges and universities founded and maintained by her bounty and munificent patronage. The facts are triumphantly supported and vindicated by her Catholic children throughout all ages and in every land, who have given abounding proofs and shining testimony in the talents nourished by her teaching, and the genius which developed and matured under her stimulus and generous encouragement.

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