THE MYTHS OF THE "DARK" AGES.

IN the Brief addressed by the Holy Father to Cardinals Pitra and Hergenrœther, he dwells with his accustomed earnestness on the importance of history. "It is not only the guide of life," he tells us, "and the light of truth;" it is also "one of those arms most fit to defend the Church." Of course, Leo XIII., whose merits as a scholar are admitted by all, when uttering these words spoke from the fulness of his knowledge. He had carefully watched the progress of historical research for the last fifty years, and simply formulated the verdict of science. He repeated what had been said by more than one non Catholic scholar, like Bœhmer and Pertz. But unfortunately the writers of popular literature are not Bœhmers. It sometimes takes years and decades before the results of scholarship reach the ears of the militant parson and the magazine writer. So it happens that even to-day the general reader is led to think that Catholicity has everything to fear from science and scholarship, especially from historical science and scholarship. The best and only way to meet this prejudice is an appeal to the facts. Have the results of modern historical science been favorable to the Church, or the reverse? Have they set her in a brighter or a darker light? To exhaust this question in a review article is impossible. But we may lay before our readers the decisions of the foremost historical scholars—mostly non-Catholic—on some one important question. Straws show the way the tide flows. A fair presentation of the conclusions of scientific historical inquiry on a number of points affecting the Church may justly be taken to indicate its general drift. We shall place before our readers some of the findings of history on the so-called Dark Ages. On no other subject has recent inquiry shed more light; from no other period had the enemies of the Church derived so much material for use in their assaults. It is a broad, extensive subject, involving many points formerly warmly controverted. It seems to be eminently fitted to be a test question.

This view is strongly reinforced by Prof. Creighton in a late number of the *English Historical Review.* He is discussing the dissolution of the English monasteries by Henry VIII. "The monasteries," he says, "were neither better nor worse (in Henry's time) than they had been any time for the two previous centuries.

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. . . . No one for two centuries had looked upon the monks as saints; no one at the time of the dissolution looked upon them as monsters of vice. They were, on the whole, excellent members of society, kindly landlords resident on their estates, leading very respectable lives. But they were exposed to all the odium which always attaches to social superiors, capitalists and landlords alike. The feudal lord, who was generally non-resident, was only grumbled at in the abstract; the monks were grumbled at in the concrete. Every one who wished to raise his voice in protest, as a reformer in things ecclesiastical, political, or social, always denounced the monks because he was sure of an approving audience. Doubtless the monks were the butts of many a mediæval joke. They were not all of them unworldly, or temperate, or chaste."[1]

Such are some. of the conclusions of the most reliable and learned historical scholars on the Middle Ages. They differ widely from the views traditional in popular English literature. We shall not comment on them. We leave our readers to judge whether or not history is "one of the arms most fit to defend the Church."

Before reviewing the results of modern research on the Middle Ages it is well to premise a few remarks. The Middle Ages, it is often assumed by writers both Catholic and non-Catholic, are typically Catholic Ages. True and false. At no other time, perhaps, have churchmen, besides the authority belonging to them as churchmen, wielded so much power, especially political power; but again at no other time have kings and nobles so systematically taken possession of the dignities of the Church. On the surface the world appeared submissive to Christ and his vicar; under the surface ambitious princes intrigued against the Church, and the remnants of heathenism still waged stubborn war against her, nay, often tainted the lives, the practices and morals of her children with superstition. Popes and bishops and emperors struggled to put down these remnants of heathenism, as, for instance, the ordeals or judgments of God; even to-day the duel survives, and is upheld by a revived paganism. Often in the woods, but a few miles away from the church and the monastery, secret pagans performed the rites of Wodan and Thor. In fact, paganism or no paganism, the Church never lacked enemies; Ormuzd will ever be opposed by Ahriman. This must be borne in mind in apportioning the responsibility of the Church during the Middle Ages as well as at other times. Moreover, we must not make the Church answer for each crime that was committed, or each virtue left unpractised during that period. History throws light on the

[1] M. Creighton, in "Engl. Hist. Review," April, 1888, p. 377.

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Church, and enables us to judge of her actions chiefly on the principle, "By their fruits you shall know them." In applying this, however, we must, firstly, be certain that the fruit really belongs to the tree to which we ascribe it, and sécondly, remember that even on the best trees some of the fruit is cankered or worm-eaten, some of the branches prove barren or wither. Again, we must bear in mind the circumstances of time and place. Moral right is always right, moral wrong always wrong. We would not excuse or defend a robber or murderer because he happened to be a mediæval baron. But in the political and scientific world time and place are for much. Washington achieved and solidly established freedom for us; we honor him, we praise his wisdom. What would we think of the man who would undertake to depose Mwanga and establish a republic in Uganda? Besides, we must not expect from the child the learning and wisdom of the sage. The Middle Ages were the childhood and youth of modern Europe. They had to learn with effort what we receive gratuitously from our forefathers. We may, therefore, justly and sincerely praise in those days what we should not wish to see revived in our own. We may award great credit for deeds that to-day would be commonplace. We must not censure our mediæval forefathers for not doing impossibilities. Of modern mechanical, chemical, and electrical discoveries and inventions we are justly proud; ignorance of these same inventions and discoveries cannot fairly be made a ground of reproach to mediæval times. Now that steam presses strike off thousands of pages in an hour, it is easy to have books, to read, to own a library; we have a right to rejoice over our good fortune, and to pity the times when it took months to make a single copy of a work of which we print thousands in a week; we have no right to berate and revile those times. It may be well to remember that the art of printing was invented in 1450, not in the nineteenth century.

To form a correct judgment of the Middle Ages, these principles must be kept in view. If we do so, the picture of those times displayed by modern historical research will astonish us. We will be amazed that there could have been a time, and that not very remote, when scarce a light relieved the sombre color in which it was customary to paint the "dark" ages. A black background of universal ignorance, an atmosphere of superstition, the blood-red demons of fanaticism and cruelty in the foreground, dark gray filth and poverty and wretchedness in the middle distance; the love of morality and justice has sunk out of sight, charity hardly sheds a flickering light, all is darkness, pitch black darkness. Kings and nobles, proud of their ignorance, rob and murder; priests and monks, sunk in idleness, at most, discuss the interesting question how many angels can stand

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on the point of a needle; art, science and literature are banished or made little of; the Bible is unknown and uncared for; ambitious Popes enthrall kings and people; the Church crushes the spirit of nationality and hinders the growth of nations; she discourages inquiry and learning, makes religion the slave of worldly ends, neglects charity. How such an age could have given to the world a Charlemagne and an Alfred, a Barbarossa and a St. Louis, an Alcuin and an Aquinas, a Roger Bacon and a Copernicus, a Gutenberg and a Columbus, is a riddle that should have opened the eyes of the shallowest and most ignorant of unconscious, and warned the most daring of conscious libellers.

But times have changed. Even Protestants and infidels are ready to repudiate such self-destructive misrepresentation. "During the last century," says Frederick von Hellwald, a devoted disciple of the materialist, Prof. Haeckel, "men's judgment of the Middle Ages has passed through three stages; it has denounced, admired, and understood them. The second half of the 18th century felt an interest in degrading the Middle Ages as much as possible; by doing so that age strove to become conscious of its own perfection. It gathered the charges made by serious satirists and enthusiastic preachers in the Middle Ages against their contemporaries; every complaint about the moral decay of the times was dragged to light. It described mediæval constitutions and state decrees, and found no difficulty in proving that they little aided the true objects of the State; the ideas of feudalism and the law of brute force (Faustrecht) were the most dreadful notions a trained politician could conceive. It pointed out that many useful inventions had not been made, and that, therefore, manufactures and comfort were in a distressing condition. It thought it had fully proved its point, when investigating the state of religion and science, it could show up the blindest obedience to authority and the densest superstition; the natural sciences were at the lowest ebb, philosophy unproductive, philology ill conditioned, theology that controlled all things could not lead to the deliverance of the intellect. So judged men even at the end of the last century. Hardly a dozen years later views had become greatly changed, and the Middle Ages were regarded with quite different eyes. The romantic school discovered an ocean of light of dazzling brilliancy, where their predecessors had seen only dark masses of shadow. But opposed to these two points of view, detestation and veneration, condemnation and worship, there is a third point of view, that of understanding, of intelligence, of objective historical knowledge. We will see neither all light nor all shade: for us, too, mediævalism is a state of comparative imperfection, and we may accept the term 'night.' But it is a clear bright

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night, in which sparkle countless stars, beaming some gently, some brilliantly."[1]

Von Hellwald's self-complacent superiority over his predecessors of the eighteenth century is a little amusing; still his views are clear proof that light has begun to break. Yet even now there is much darkness among us. "In England," says Prof. Karl Pearson, of University College, London, "there seems no reason why anything but rubbish should be written [on the Middle Ages]. In our universities no training is offered in mediæval thought, and its language, mediæval Latin, is dubbed a barbarism unworthy of scientific study." "It is almost impossible to find a German Mediævalist (I would except such men as Maurenbrecher, Geffken, Kampschulte and one or two others practically of the past) who does not prostitute his scholarship to a preconceived religious opinion, and so remain blind to all but one side of a question."[2] What admissions, then, are made by non-Catholic German writers are all the stronger proof that the tide of evidence on the other side is irresistible. There are, however, honorable exceptions to Prof. Pearson's rule, and we hope to introduce some of them to our readers. Meantime, whilst recognizing the value of Von Hellwald's concessions, we are not impressed by the happiness of his comparison of the Middle Ages to a star-lit "night," unless he means to imply that the night is the parent of the day. To us Prof. Paulsen, of the Berlin University, seems more happy. "The Middle Ages," says he, "are the school-time of the Germanic nations. Antiquity is their teacher, though not youthful, pagan antiquity, but antiquity grown old and religious."[3] Perhaps they have been described even more happily by the author of Barnes' Modern School History. "The thoughtful student of history sees in the Middle Ages a time, not of decay, but of preparation; a period during which the seeds of a better growth were germinating in the soil."[4]

But let us come to particulars. Among the bugbears with which the defamers of mediævalism frightened the simple public, let us begin with that which always seemed most dreadful, the Popes. They were either wicked men, or ambitious, designing, worldly-minded men, who aimed at universal empire and crushed nations and the national spirit, or they were no men at all. The popess Joan haunted Protestant historians from the Magdeburg Centuriators down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Still even two hundred years ago Leibnitz was too enlightened to

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1 Von Hellwald, Cultur geschichte in ihrer natürlichen Enturickelung, p. 409.
2 K. Pearson in the "Academy" of Sept. 26th, 1885.
3 Paulsen—"Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts," p. 6.
4 Barnes's Modern History, p. 12, note.

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believe in the spectre. Since the Protestant Church historian Neander has stamped it as a myth, and especially since Döllinger published his "Papstfabeln des Mittelalters," the spectre has been effectually laid. No self-respecting, well-informed writer cares now-a-days to mention the tale of the popess Joan except as an exploded fable.

We come next to the power-grasping Popes. Of these, beginning with Gregory the Great, there used to be a whole legion; to investigate them all would take a company of Bollandists. But "Gregory" [the Great], says Arnold, "was the real founder of papal primacy in its later signification. . . . . And yet at bottom he did no more than to gather all the elements, which up to that time had developed themselves in the Church, in faith and practice, in constitution and discipline, and to make them the basis of a new development. He is in no sense a 'Reformer'; he only took up the traditions of antiquity and with them entered into the new era, not greedy of honor or power, not a shrewd politician, but wholly full of the spirit which lived in the Church; whilst the patriarch of Constantinople just at that time claimed the title of *Universal Bishop*, Gregory, in striking contrast, called himself the 'servant of the servants of God,' and this title the Roman bishops have retained to the present day."[1]

Perhaps no Pope has been attacked as virulently as Gregory VII., the great Hildebrand. Against him for centuries the older Protestants discharged their bile and their bitterness. *Höllenbrand* (brand of hell) he was called by the Magdeburg Centuriators, whilst Bibliander called him Gog the king of Magog. He aspired to universal monarchy, he unrighteously and cruelly humbled the emperor, he claimed the right to make and unmake kings and emperors, he was ambitious, proud, hypocritical, rash, obstinate. But abuse and denunciation are not history; revilings are not proofs. The day of investigation came, the day of honest historical research, and with it the day of Hildebrand's triumph. Hildebrand, says Johannes von Müller, "was firm and bold as a hero, wise as a senator, zealous as a prophet, strict in his morals, tenacious of one idea." The Protestant Church historians Gieseler and Neander admit that he was convinced of the justice of his cause. Gaab, Voigt, Giesebrecht, Bowden, Luden, Rühs, Leo, Stenzel, Creighton, all of them Protestants, have shown up many of the errors of former historians and done justice to Gregory's great qualities. At present all well-informed writers praise his honesty, his zeal for religion, his justice.[2] Popes Hadrian IV.

[1] W. Arnold—Deutsche Geschichte, ii., 1, p. 171.

[2] For the Protestant authorities on Gregory VII., see Hergenroether's Kirchengeschichte, 3d ed., vol. ii., pp. 210 and 230, notes.

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(Nicholas Breakspeare, the only English Pope) and Alexander III., the contemporaries of Frederick I., Barbarossa, were also often accused of undue worldly ambition, of attempting to degrade the Empire and the Emperor. But Frederick, though a man of undoubted genius and possessed of the noblest qualities of the heart, unfortunately misconceived his relations to the Church and the Popes. "Towards the Church," says the Protestant historian Leo,[1] "Frederick from the beginning assumed as haughty an attitude as any of his predecessors of the Frankish house; in this respect he was no better than Henry V." "Only a Pope that was ready to sacrifice his own rights and those of others could continue to have a good understanding with such an emperor as Frederick."[2] "Frederick wished, like Charlemagne, to rule Rome and the bishops of the Empire as his vassals," says Gregorovius. The false conception of Barbarossa and the Popes Hadrian IV. and Alexander III., propagated by former historians, were based on the *Gesta Frederici I.*, written by Otto, Bishop of Freising, and continued by Ragewin, his secretary. Now Otto was Frederick's uncle, and built up his history on notes furnished him by the Emperor. "Otto," says Wattenbach,[4] "wrote to Frederick 'that he was ready to write the history of his (Frederick's) time if the Emperor wished it, and if he would send him the necessary material by his notaries.' And Frederick accepted the proposal. We still possess a letter of his dated September, 1156, in which he sent a rapid review of his deeds to Otto, which the latter was to expand in his history. We may, in a way, regard this letter as the text on which Otto based his new work, the *Gesta Frederici*." When the Bishop died before its completion, Ragewin, Otto's scholar and notary, continued the work. "The Emperor himself, who manifestly took a deep interest in the work, had approved of Ragewin's choice as continuator, and his chancellor and notary, to whom Ragewin dedicated his work, appears to have furnished him facts and documents."[5] No wonder that history derived from such a source should not be too favorable to Frederick's opponents. At all events, now that sound criticism has recognized the need of using these works with caution, Giesebrecht speaks

[1] Leo—Vorlesungen über die Geschichte des deutschen Volkes und Reiches, II., 648, quoted in "Geschichtslügen," p. 183. The latter little work, a refutation of current historical slanders against the Church and churchmen, is a work full of learning, that briefly, fairly and quietly puts down the chief lies that have disfigured many histories. It is so very handy and so useful, that it richly deserves to be translated.

[2] Döllinger, Kirchengeschichte, ii., p. 175, quoted in Geschichtslügen, p. 183.

[3] Gregorovius, Geschichte der Stadt Rome, iv., p. 521, quoted in Geschichtslügen, p. 291.

[4] Geschichtsquellen des M. A., p. 423.

[5] Wattenbach, l. c., p. 423.

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very unfavorably of the first book of the *Gesta Frederici I.* Most non-Catholic historians justify Hadrian and Alexander on many charges on which their predecessors had condemned them.

Since Hurter wrote his life of Innocent III. it has been unnecessary to defend that wonderful Pontiff. His learning, his ability, his wisdom, his good intentions, his charity have been acknowledged without stint. "Innocent III.," says Johannes von Müller,[1] "was a man full of kindness and affability, full of determination, extremely simple and saving in his way of living, generous to extravagance in his charities." Not unfrequently now non-Catholic writers call him "the greatest of the Popes."

The Popes of the tenth century have been painted in the blackest colors, not only by Protestant but by Catholic historians. No crime was too dreadful to be ascribed to some of them, especially to Sergius III., John X. and John XII. The chief witness against them was Liudprand, Bishop of Cremona and chancellor of the Emperor Otto the Great. At Otto's court, between 958 and 962, he had begun a work on the history of his own time, which he laid aside when appointed to the see of Cremona. "On account of the great political changes in Italy, the work had to a great extent lost its purpose. For this had chiefly been to pay back all those who had been kind or hostile to him according to their deserts, but especially to give vent to his hatred against King Berengar and (his Queen) Willa; hence he called this work of retribution *Antapodosis*. In it he has heartily denounced his enemies."[2] Unfortunately the Popes in question were Berengar's friends or connections, and would, therefore, naturally come in for a share of Liudprand's retribution. Notwithstanding the scantiness of our information on this period, Liudprand has been proved guilty of numerous misstatements, and more careful study in many other cases has thrown doubts on his stories. The discovery of Liudprand's defects as a historian led to the removal of at least some of the stains that blackened the names of these tenth century Popes, who were forced on the Church by the corrupt and unscrupulous Italian nobles and those wicked, scheming women, Theodora and Marozia. This was the time when the Papacy, to use Döllinger's words, "was bound hand and foot, and, being deprived of her freedom, cannot be made to answer for the disgrace which she was forced to suffer." Pertz, Ranke, Waitz, Jaffé, Giesebrecht, Wattenbach, enlightened by newly found documents and deeper study, are all inclined to judge of these Popes less harshly than former historians. In short,

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[1] Von Müller, Allg. Weltgeschichte, vol. ii., p. 149, quoted in Geschichtslügen, p. 129.

[2] Wattenbach, l. c., p. 264.

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Pertz's saying is shown to be more and more correct every day: "The best defence of the Popes is the revelation of what they were."

The Popes during the Middle Ages, then, were far better men than they were painted by the Centuriators and their successors. Some of the best abused were men of exceptional merit and greatness. Through the Popes and through the bishops the Church exerted great influence in the political as well as in her own proper sphere. The union of Church and State was close throughout Europe. What were its effects? Did it enslave nations? Did it promote absolutism? Speaking of the consequences of Charlemagne's coronation by Leo III., and especially of the union of Church and State that followed it, Arnold says: "Much more dangerous was the contest which the union of the Empire with the Church made probable. For the doctrine of the two supreme powers could only be carried out as long as they lived in concord. A settlement (*Ausgleich*) between the Papal and imperial powers, each of which rested on a different principle of existence, was impossible by peaceful means. But in spite of the long continued struggle, which arose in consequence of the union, it was fortunate for the West, firstly, that the union took place, and secondly, that it took place only after the Church had become independent. For the last great result of this struggle was no other than the securing of the free development both of Church and of State."[1] "The principle," says Samuel Laing, "that the civil government, or state, or church and state united, of a country is entitled to regulate its religious belief, has more of intellectual thraldom in it than the power of the popish Church ever exercised in the darkest ages; for it had no civil power joined to its religious power. It only worked through the civil power of each country. The Church of Rome was an independent, distinct, and often an opposing power in every country to the civil power; a circumstance in the social economy of the middle ages to which, perhaps, Europe is indebted for her civilization and *freedom*,—for not being in a state of barbarism and slavery of the East and of every country, ancient and modérn, in which the civil and religious power have been united in one government. Civil liberty is closely connected with religious liberty, with the Church being independent of the State."[2]

The Church, therefore, was the bulwark of liberty in the Middle Ages. It was more. The unity, authority, and universality of the Catholic Church, strange to say, did more for the creation, the growth, and strengthening of the nations of Europe, than national

[1] Arnold, Deutsche Geschichte, ii., 1, p. 305.

[2] S. Laing, Notes of a Traveller; quoted by Bp. Spalding in his History of the Reformation, vol. i., p. 67.

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churches could have done. "The idea of a national church," we cite Arnold, "which even impartial historians like Rettberg cannot wholly shake off, was wholly inconceivable in the times of St. Boniface. For in the first place it was strange to Christianity in general, which calls peoples to its fold, not as separate communities, but all together; and in this sense the Church in union with the Roman Empire had become an essentially cosmopolitan institution. Moreover, and above all, the nation itself did not exist. Boniface helped to found it precisely by not founding a national church; he overcame the mutual antagonism of races and tribes by the unity of the Church."[1]

How many preconceptions, hostile to Church and Popes, has modern historical science thus dissipated? The Church of the Middle Ages, as we have seen, was the bulwark of freedom and the nurse of nations; the Papacy, moreover, instead of being the enslaver of man's intellect, was liberal, liberal to the verge of rashness. "Mr. Creighton" (an Anglican canon and Professor of Ecclesiastical History, at Cambridge, who edits the *English Historical Review*, and has written a "History of the Popes during the Reformation Period"), "Mr. Creighton," says Lord Acton, in the *English Historical Review* (vol. ii., p. 577), "insists on the liberality of the Popes not only at the time of which he treats, but generally. Fanaticism had no place in Rome, nor did the Papal Court trouble itself about trifles. It allowed free thought beyond the extremest limits of ecclesiastical prudence.—The papacy in the Middle Ages always showed a tolerant spirit in matters of opinion. We cannot think that Roman inquisitors were likely to err on the side of severity."

That the organic unity of the Church, that the centring of her authority in one hand, that the Papacy, in brief, was a condition *sine qua non* of the spread of Christianity in Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries, is freely and honestly avowed by more than one non-Catholic historian. To Rome and the Pope, therefore, they award the merit of having dealt the fatal blow to barbarism, not only in Northern Europe but also in Gaul, of having civilized those countries, in short, of having established Christianity and the Church there on a firm foundation. "As in Chlodwig's day," says Arnold, "the future of the Church lay not in Arianism, but in the Apostolic doctrine of the Trinity, so now (in the time of St. Boniface) the strictest order and discipline (which Arnold claimed before depended on the union of the German Church with Rome) was necessary if Christianity was not to lose its character, but was to maintain itself in opposition to a rude clergy and people, and a warlike

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[1] Arnold, l. c., ii., 1, p. 200.

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state, as a power which was to conquer and renew the world."[1] And again: "There was a third circumstance which strengthened the hands of Boniface—his connection with Rome, and the efficient and steady support which it gave him."[2] "The essential difference," says, Wattenbach, "between this (Anglo-Saxon) and the Scots (Irish) missions lies in their relation to the Roman See. Since St. Augustin, sent by Gregory the Great, had founded the English Church, it had remained in the closest union with Rome, and from Rome it was governed, and its church firmly and securely organized. Hence these (the Anglo-Saxon) missions stood upon a wholly different basis and were not exposed to isolation, and the disorganization resulting therefrom, which limited the success of the Irish missionaries to the foundation of some monasteries."[3] Bulwark of civil and religious liberty during the Middle Ages, Christianizer and therefore civilizer of England, Gaul, Germany and Northern Europe, foster-mother of nationalities—surely these are grand titles, and these titles are awarded by modern historical science to the Church of the Popes, to the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. But are these the only claims she has to our regard? Was this the limit of her activity and influence? Did she do nothing to foster art and the sciences? Did she really leave the world she had conquered, in darkness and gloom? Were the Middle Ages really "dark" ages in the world of art and intellect? What says modern critical history?

To the art student of to-day it seems amazing that the Middle Ages should have been called "dark" in the world of art. The very stones cry out against it. Men must have seen darkness, because they shut their eyes. For ancient Egypt its wonderful architectural remains alone have justly vindicated a high place amongst the cultured nations of the world; for mediæval Europe its noble cathedrals and monasteries, not to speak of its civic architecture, utter a loud protest against being denounced as uncultured and barbarous. Stupendous, without doubt, were the temples of Memphis and Thebes, works unsurpassed in grandeur and majesty; surely, the great cathedrals of France, England, Belgium and Germany, as embodiments of the highest principles of taste and art, may well challenge comparison with the great works of the Thothmes and the Ramses. Beginning with the great palace structures of Charlemagne at Aachen, in the ninth century, decade after decade adds to the great masterpieces of architectural art, until, in the fifteenth century, all Christian Europe became a vast workshop, engaged in building countless structures, civil

[1] Arnold, l. c., p. 200.
[2] Arnold, l. c., p. 188.
[3] Wattenbach, Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen, p. 93.

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and sacred. Great cities were few, but each town of moderate prominence prided itself on one or more churches, each fit to be the cathedral of a metropolis. If truthful proportion, correct decoration, fit co-ordination of parts, delicate tracery, beauty of design are marks of true art, and if true art is evidence of culture, then indeed the Middle Ages were not lacking in taste and culture. This art, too, it must be kept in mind, was an original art, born of the times and the people, conceived by the deep and true religious sentiments of the period; not the genial creations of some one or a dozen of master minds, but the creation of monk and mason. Seldom is a church or a monastery ascribed to this or that architect, to such an extent was it the common work of many men. And what does all this amazing activity in artistic building signify? Not that the ages were dark and barbarous, not that they possessed artistic taste in architecture only, or ordinary mechanical skill. To erect the mediæval minsters required profound knowledge of mechanics, of the strength of materials, of the strains to which they must be subjected. The monastery of Mont St. Michel today is a marvel of engineering skill. Mechanics and engineering imply mathematics. But this is not all. The sculptor, too, and the painter, were called in, and the artistic worker in metals,—in bronze, in iron, in silver, in gold,—the glass decorator and the ivory carver, the lace maker and the moulder in clay. Every art, high and humble, zealously offered its service to embellish the Lord's temple; every artist was inspired with great and noble ideas, when working for the Lord's house. In technical skill perhaps the modern painter or sculptor may surpass the men of those days; in originality and in the exalted idealism which transcends all technical skill and covers a multitude of technical defects, modern art has failed to maintain the lofty heights of the mediæval monastic artist.

In science the close, not to say slavish, adherence of the men of the Middle Ages to Aristotle, their "philosopher" *par excellence*, hindered any pronounced or striking progress. Besides, they felt it to be their first and paramount mission to preach the Gospel, and to establish on a scientific basis Christian morals and doctrine in a society partly decaying, partly immature and swayed by the titanic passions of victorious barbarians. Herculean indeed was their task, as any one must admit who will read the annals of the house of Clovis, in Gaul. Still the very fact that mediæval scholars accepted Aristotle as their guide in science bears witness to the soundness of their judgment. Equally creditable to their discernment was the choice of Ptolemy as "the geographer" of the age. The masses, it is true, knew little of Ptolemy and the rotundity of the earth, and many illustrious in other walks of learning

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may have had very false notions on the shape of the earth. But this is equally true of the ancient Romans in the height of their prosperity. Tacitus, for instance, scholar and philosopher though he was, was wholly mistaken as to the form of the earth, as any one can see who reads his Agricola. But in many monasteries Ptolemy's works were known, and we owe their preservation to monks of the thirteenth century. In geography, moreover, the Middle Ages did not rest content with the knowledge they found in Ptolemy. Mr. Major, in his edition of the "Voyages of the Venetian Brothers, Nicolo and Antonio Zeno," for the Hakluyt Society, has made it more than probable that the Zeni discovered America in the fourteenth century. At all events Columbus himself was the offspring of the Middle Ages. In an edition of Pomponius Mela printed at Venice in 1482, the sources of the Nile are correctly traced to two lakes in equatorial Africa. Some unknown mediæval traveler had thus anticipated one of the most brilliant discoveries of the last few decades. The Franciscan monks Giovanni Piano de Carpine, sent by Innocent IV. after the Council of Lyons (1245), and William of Rubruck, sent by St. Louis, in 1253, to the Mongol Khan, penetrated deep into Central Asia to that potentate's capital, Korakorum, and published relations of their journeys that were widely copied and read. Friar William was the first to establish that the Caspian Sea is a lake, and not a bay of the Arctic Ocean, an error, however, which had not died out at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[1] The fame of Marco Polo and that of Prince Henry the Navigator also show how much indebted the science of geography is to the Middle Ages. In theoretical science, the names of Copernicus, of Roger Bacon, of Nicolas of Cusa and John Regiomontanus redeem them from the reproach of having made no advance. The mariner's compass, which is first mentioned by Alexander Neckam about 1180, and is now believed by competent authority to have been independently invented in Europe,[2] is a practical achievement in science equal in importance to the greatest inventions of modern days, and pregnant with far reaching discoveries. To this we must add gunpowder and the printer's press—and we may well pass over in silence minor inventions. The compass, the press, and gunpowder—without these three gifts of the Middle Ages, what would become of modern history, commercial, political, scientific?

But it is time to pass to other subjects and to take up the much vexed question of scholasticism. "On the value of this (the scholastic) instruction," says Prof. Paulsen, "it is difficult to give an unprejudiced opinion. The Humanists never speak of it without

[1] Cf. Ruge, Das Zeitalter der Entdeckungen, p. 40 ff.
[2] Ruge, l. c., pp. 21, 22.

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exhausting the vocabulary of scorn in which their Latin abounds; their judgment has for the most part been accepted to this day without examination as the testimony of history. We might as well accept without inquiry the judgment of romanticism on illuminism, of the social democracy on the society of to-day as authentic information on the value of these things. It is the fate of every historical development to be put aside with hate and scorn by the next following historical development. . . . . He who begins to go over these investigations (the scholastic), so strange to us and so impenetrable, is easily discouraged and led to think that they cannot make him wiser. But is this the case with mediæval philosophy only? Do not most of those who take up Hegel read him with similar feelings and lay him aside again? . . . . Do even the Humanists—an Erasmus, an Eobanus, who were sure they wrote for eternity—fare any better?"[1] For most non-Catholics, of course, the works of St. Thomas, of Peter Lombard, of St. Anselm, etc., appear a strange new world of thought; their language seems fantastic, if not barbarous, their teaching is in many respects the contrary of all they have been taught, their concise, pregnant manner of reasoning is the very opposite of the endless entanglements of many a German philosophical oracle. So Prof. Paulsen has made great progress when he casts aside the traditional scornful condemnation and ranks the scholastics as thinkers with a thinker but recently so respected as Hegel. To their Latin he has done full justice. "If to write Latin in a barbarous way means to write it differently from the Romans of Cicero's day, then mediæval Latin undoubtedly was barbarous, almost as barbarous as German and French; but if by writing in a barbarous way we do not understand this accidental variation, but take it to mean writing in a manner unsuitable to the subject matter, writing without feeling for the genius of the language, using senseless and unfitting phrases gotten from all sources, in that case the reproach of using a barbarous language might oftener be justly made against the humanists than against the mediæval philosophers and theologians. To the scientific researches of the latter, their language is, perhaps, no less suitable and necessary than Aristotle's style is to his philosophy. All the newly coined abstract terms, *substantia*, *essentia*, *existentia*, *quantitas*, *qualitas*, *identitas*, *quidditas*, *hæcceitas*, that are wont to be produced to wondering and gaping readers by humanistic babblers as monstrous portents, were clearly necessary to their investigations. Most of them were formed after Aristotle's technical terms as models, and that they are neither useless nor senseless creations is best shown by the fact, that in spite of the efforts of the humanists they live to the present day; for they

[1] Prof. Paulsen, Geschichte des gelehrten, p. 20.

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have passed into modern languages either bodily or in translations."[1] "The reproach so often repeated by humanists, ancient and modern, that Cicero could not have understood the Latin of the Middle Ages, those who used it would have pronounced absurd. They did not speak this language to Cicero, but to men that understood it, which was all they intended; moreover, Cicero's poverty-stricken language did not meet their requirements."

Here, perhaps, it is not out of place to say a few words about mediæval grammarians. "Fr. Haase," says Paulsen, "in his monograph *De Medii Aevi Studiis Philologicis*, finds the mediæval grammarians full of mistakes and errors in matters depending on historical research, *i. e.*, in the etymology and the vocabulary; but where there is question of philosophical acumen, they display the whole vigor of their intellect and deserve our admiration. This is especially the case in syntax. This was built up for the most part independently by the mediæval grammarians, Ebrard Bethunensis in his book entitled *Græcismus* (written in 1124), and Alexander; and they were so successful that the syntax of to-day, though we are ignorant of the fact, is based on their labors."[2]

But to return to Scholasticism as an embodiment of thought. A writer in the *Saturday Review*,[3] criticising F. Harper's "Metaphysics of the Schools," tells us,—in part repeating Prof. Pearson and Prof. Paulsen,—that "on the whole he (F. Harper) has not exaggerated the ignorant contempt and the contempt sometimes not wholly ignorant, and, therefore, less excusable, with which one of the *most active and fertile periods of human thought* has been treated."[4] "Contrary to the common opinion," he says further on, "the schoolmen by no means reject the criteria furnished by common sense, but, on the contrary, give them a position from which they are entirely excluded in many very modern philosophies." He approves of F. Harper's "recommendation of such studies as he (F. Harper) is handling," as a remedy for the inexactness of thought and expression in this age. . . . . It is not improbable that the distaste to the schoolmen has been kept up not a little owing to this very fact (*i. e.*, the general inexactness of thought and expression now prevailing) of which it is also in a way the cause."

The value of mediæval philosophy is also recognized with honorable fairness by the great German jurist, Prof. Rudolph Ihering. In the second edition of the second volume of his great work, "Der Zweck im Recht," he refers to a criticism on his work by a Catholic priest, W. Hohoff, chaplain at Hüffe. "This gentleman," says Ihering, "proves for me by citations

[1] Paulsen, l. c., p. 27.
[2] Paulsen, l. c., p. 26.
[3] September 27, 1884.
[4] The italics are ours.

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from Thomas of Aquin, that this great mind had with entire correctness recognized the realistico-practical and social as well as the historical element in morals. The charge of ignorance, shown by this fact, which he lodges against me, I cannot deny; but with far more force than myself does this charge touch modern philosophers and theologians, who have failed to make use of the grand ideas of this man. Amazed, I ask, how was it possible that such truths, once they had been taught, could have been wholly forgotten by our Protestant science? What errors it might have saved itself had it taken them to heart! For my part, I should, perhaps, not have written my book, had I known them, for the fundamental ideas with which I was concerned are found laid down in that powerful thinker with perfect clearness and in most pregnant language."[1]

Protestant science might find many more deep and fruitful thoughts in every department of philosophy and theology, should it consult St. Thomas and the great mediæval schoolmen in the spirit of Prof. Ihering. All that is needed is research,—honest, unprejudiced research,—and enlightened, impartial criticism.

But we must hurry on from the schoolmen to the preachers of the Middle Ages. "Milman," says a writer in the *Saturday Review*,[2] asserts "that the sacerdotal Christianity of the Middle Ages disdained and almost dropped preaching; 'the only teaching of the people was the ritual.' And he adds, 'that preaching thus ignored by the church became the mark and strength of all the sects and all the heresiarchs.' There is a certain plausibility in this statement, but it has to be balanced by the important counter-statement of the rise and enormous influence of the two great preaching orders of Dominicans and Franciscans in the thirteenth century. . . . . Charlemagne urged on his bishops the importance of preaching, probably acting by the advice of his chief religious counsellor, Alcuin, who observes in a letter to Theodulph, Archbishop of Orleans, that as the royal crown is adorned with gems, faithful preaching ought to be the ornament of the archiepiscopal pallium. In another letter addressed to the people of Canterbury, he urges them to secure the services of many preachers, 'lest the fountains of truth be dried up among you.' Elsewhere he refers to a custom, prevalent at the time, of reading homilies of the Fathers in church on Sundays and festivals; contemporary synods and bishops also enjoined the duty of preaching on the clergy with a persistency, which shows that it was already beginning to be neglected." Fair as these remarks are in the main, the last few words are apt to mislead. Preaching was by no means wholly neglected after Char-

[1] Von Ihering, Der Zweck im Recht, vol. ii., p. 161, 2d ed.

[2] Saturday Review, June 12, 1886.

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lemagne. Speaking of the beginning of French literature, Saintsbury informs us that "by the eleventh century it may be taken as certain that not merely were laws, charters, and other formal documents written in French, not merely were *sermons constantly composed and preached* in that tongue, but also works of definite literature were produced in it."[1] Of St. Bernard we possess forty-four sermons, though whether he wrote them originally in French or in Latin is unknown. Much later, in the fifteenth century, the great Strasburg preacher, Geiler von Kaisersberg, wrote most of his sermons in Latin, though he preached them in German. At all events, "Maurice de Sully, who presided over the see of Paris from 1160 to 1195, has left a considerable number of sermons which exist in manuscripts of very different dialects. . . . . In the following century the number of preachers whose vernacular work has been preserved is very large; the increase being beyond all doubt partially due to the foundation of the two great preaching orders of St Francis and St. Dominic. The existing literature of this class, dating from the thirteenth, fourteenth, and the early fifteenth centuries, is enormous."[2] Some of the oldest English prose writings that have come down to us are homilies or sermons. A German Protestant, R. Cruel, in his "History of German Preaching in the Middle Ages," has proved at length that not only in the fifteenth century, but during the Middle Ages in general, more preaching was done in Germany than at present, and that no German preacher ever preached in Latin to a lay congregation of his countrymen.[3]

In no respect did the Church of the Middle Ages develop a nobler and grander activity than in her deeds of charity. Charity, of course, is the keystone of Christianity, and charity without works is a hollow sound. Hence, even during the ages of persecution, the refuge for strangers (*xenodo chium*) had sprung into existence among the early Christians. After Constantine's conversion one of his first laws provided for the care of infants, and more than one inscription in the Catacombs bears witness to the great number of foundlings supported by Christian charity. In the fourth century a noble Christian lady, Fabiola, founded the first hospital in Rome. At Cæsarea, St. Basil established another, as well as an asylum for lepers. To the Church the weak and the sick were ever objects of motherly solicitude. But never, perhaps, in her history did she unfold this characteristic more resplendently than during the Middle Ages. Catholic Europe was covered with monasteries. "Every monastery," says a writer in the *Saturday*

[1] G. Saintsbury, History of French Literature, p. 7.
[2] Saintsbury, l. c., p. 141.
[3] Geschichtslügen, p. 387.

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Review,[1] "as a rule had its infirmary not only for its own members, but for invalids and convalescents generally, and the nursing of the weak, the blind and the aged. The infirmaries are the patterns of modern hospitals." Founders of hospitals, the same writer informs us, were generally unknown, because such foundations were so common and connected with the very essence of Christianity. "We may be justified in recalling the fact," says the celebrated Prof. Virchow, "that the almost unbounded power of the Church in the Middle Ages was founded not only on the strength and unity of faith and the unimpeachable sanctity of her traditions, but essentially on the active and careful helpfulness with which the Church in every sphere of science and work was the active centre of organized educated society. Innocent III. undertook the organization of hospitals in this magnanimous spirit. . . . . In Rome the mother house of all these hospitals still exists, the venerable hospital of *San Spirito in Sassia*. Sprung from a house for pilgrims, founded in 727 by the Anglo-Saxon king Ina, this house, originally called the 'School of Saxons' (*Schola Saxonum*), had grown in the course of time. When Innocent III., in 1204, began to carry out his idea of a hospital organization to be extended throughout Christendom, he could go to this institution as a ready-made existing foundation. From Montpellier he called Guy, the founder of the order of the Holy Ghost, placed him at the head of the whole organization, and with his aid began immediately to found larger inns (*Binnengasthaeuser*) in all countries. In Germany the work proceeded with such rapidity that in the course of a few decades almost every larger and many smaller cities had their Holy Ghost Hospital, often connected with a church of the Holy Ghost, the members of the order always keeping up their connection with Rome. From this centre a fixed set of rules passed to the more recent institutions, which were no longer *inns*, but real hospitals for the diseased and weak."[2] With the order of the Holy Ghost the order of St. Lazarus vied in charity. Its hospitals, called *Lazarettoes*, were designed for the care of lepers. The grand-mastership of this order became hereditary in the house of Savoy. To-day, however, when King Humbert confers the order of St. Lazarus, neither the grand master nor the new knight gives much thought to the poor lepers, nor, in fact, to the sick and wretched. Besides the order of St. Lazarus the Knights Templars and Hospitallers originally devoted themselves to the care of the sick in Palestine. They, too, gradually drifted away from their primary purpose, and became the bulwarks of Christendom against the Mussulman. But the grand foundation of Innocent III. was

[1] Sat. Review, Sept. 27th, 1885.

[2] Prof. Virchow, Hospitäler and Lazarette, pp. 15–16.

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cherished and fostered by Popes and kings and free cities until the fatal schism of the sixteenth century. Then with the other monks the brothers of the Holy Ghost were turned out of their homes, and the sick and the stricken given over to the tender mercies of the world. "In Germany," says Virchow, "as the power of the princes grew stronger and the bureaucracy developed more freely, the care of the new hospital fell to the State more and more. It has required a strong moral movement and hard pressure from without to revive the activity of individuals and communities in this direction. Here precisely is the point where our generation must learn from the much abused Middle Ages."[1]

Wonderful, in truth, was the power for good exerted during the Middle Ages by Popes and bishops and monks, in short, by the Church. "In the Church," says Wattenbach, "all those took refuge that still had a feeling and inclination for literary culture, which no more found a home in the mad struggles of the world. This we recognize in the lives of Cassiodorus, Jordanis, Apollinaris Sidonius; and Venantius Fortunatus, too, in advanced old age became Bishop of Poitiers, where he died at the beginning of the seventh century. The essentially lifeless and artificial literature of the grammarians died with its last representatives that the Franks had still found, and henceforth only the Church preserved the germs of intellectual life, which she naturally applied to her own service."[2] "At the beginning of the Middle Ages, as we have seen, the men who were distinguished by literary culture, even if they did not owe it to the Church, yet at last turned to her, and the same happened in Charlemagne's time. The Frankish knight disdained all learning, and Charles's efforts in this direction remained without lasting success. Soon the Church was again the sole protectress of the pencil and the pen."[3] And so she remained in most respects during the greater part of the Middle Ages. Her priests and monks copied not only the Bible and the Fathers, but also the Latin classics; they were the chroniclers and historians of those days, the mathematicians, musicians and architects; they were the philosophers and grammarians; they were the farmers and the craftsmen. "It is impossible," says Dean Maitland, "to get even a superficial knowledge of the mediæval history of Europe without seeing how greatly the world of that period was indebted to the monastic orders, and feeling that, whether they were good or bad in other matters, monasteries were beyond all price in those days of misrule and turbulence, as places where (it may be imperfectly, yet better than elsewhere) God was worshipped—as a quiet

[1] Virchow, Hospitäler and Lazarette, p. 16.
[2] Wattenbach, Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen, p. 69.
[3] Wattenbach, l. c., p. 142.

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and religious refuge for helpless infancy and old age, a shelter of respectful sympathy for the orphan maiden and the desolate widow —as central points whence agriculture was to spread over bleak hills and barren downs and marshy plains, and deal bread to millions perishing with hunger and its pestilential train—as repositories of the learning which then was, and well-springs of the learning that was to be—as nurseries of art and science, giving the stimulus, the means, and the reward to invention, and aggregating around them every head that could devise and every hand that could execute—as the nucleus of the city which in after-days of pride should crown its palaces and bulwarks with the towering cross of its cathedral." [1] Men have too long looked at what the monks did not do for art and science and Church and State, and closed their eyes to what they did do. They have demanded from them the impossible. They have expected them to produce the fruit before they sowed the seed. They have riveted their eyes on their faults, and forgotten that the monks were human ; they have wilfully or in prejudice exaggerated their wrong-doing. They have found instances of ignorance and superstition in monasteries, and forthwith turned all monasteries into sinks of ignorance and superstition. Some monks, they learned from their indignant fellows, were lazy and given to vice, and immediately all monasteries were denounced as hot-beds of idleness and vice. But is it likely that so bad a tree should produce such good fruit? "It has been thought," says Prof. Brewer, "that the success of the Reformation was mainly due to the purity of the morals it inculcated, or rather to the general corruption of all classes of the clergy in particular in the fifteenth century. The declamations of moralists and theologians, the invectives of satirists, even the evidence of criminal courts on such a subject as this, whether in the sixteenth or the nineteenth century, are too partial to be decisive. Neither authentic documents, nor the literature and character of the times, nor, if national ethics is essentially connected with national art, its artistic tendencies, warrant us in believing that the era preceding the Reformation was more corrupt than that which succeeded it. It is impossible that the clergy should have been universally immoral and the laity have remained sound, temperate and loyal; but if these general arguments are not sufficient, I refer my readers to a very curious document dated the 8th of July, 1519, when a search was instituted by different commissioners on Sunday night in London and its suburbs for all suspected and disorderly persons. I fear no parish in London nor any town in the United Kingdom of the

[1] S. R. Maitland—The Dark Ages, p. iv. This book, the work of a fair man, who had deeply studied mediæval times, is full of interesting and important matter to the student of the Middle Ages.

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same amount of population would at this day pass a similar ordeal with equal credit."[1] Prof. Brewer's argument may be fairly applied to earlier periods of the Middle Ages, and we shall not go far astray when we assume that whilst, no doubt, abuses, in some cases gross abuses, existed in individual monasteries, yet most monasteries, in the words of Dean Maitland, were truly "quiet and religious refuges for helpless infancy and old age, shelters of respectful sympathy for the orphan maiden and desolate widow, repositories of learning, nurseries of art and science."

Thus has the modern historical student, by his researches and his sifting of evidence, redeemed the mediæval Church and her servants from many a reproach; thus has he awarded her many a wreath of praise, of which she may well be proud. We have, however, by no means exhausted the list of services which Church and Pope and monk rendered to mediæval Europe. There are the universities which she founded and fostered, and in which was laid the groundwork of the great modern edifice of science. There is music, which mediæval monks developed and delivered over to modern times an all but perfect structure, for they invented or improved musical notation (Guido d'Arezzo); they built great organs, in many respects unexcelled even now; they studied and penetrated deeply into harmony, a side of the art perhaps wholly unknown to the ancients; they invented measured music, and systematized it (Franco of Cologne, 1247); they invented and perfected many musical instruments. There is classical learning, which monks, amidst thousandfold difficulties, saved from perishing, and in which even nuns at times reached such perfection that a Roswitha of Gandersheim not only read Terence, but composed creditable comedies in imitation of that master of elegant conversational Latin. There is agriculture, which monks first taught the barbarians, and which they encouraged from the days of St. Boniface to the days of Luther. But to dwell upon these subjects and exploit these mines of monkish merit would demand volumes.

There is still one element in the culture of the Middle Ages, however, to which we must draw attention. We have left it to the last because, though created, like other branches of mediæval learning, by monks and priests, it was afterwards taken up, nursed and perfected by laymen. We mean the vernacular literature of the Middle Ages, especially their poetry. Since the end of the last century untold labor has been devoted to bring to light and to appreciate the mediæval poetic literature of France and Germany. Unlooked-for success has crowned the labors of men like Fauriel, Francisque Michel, Paulin and Gaston Paris, Meyer, and others,

[1] Brewer, History of the Reign of Henry VIII., vol. i., p. 600.

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in France, and the impulse given to the study of German mediæval poetry by Wieland, the Schlegels, Brentano, Görres, and the Grimms, has borne equally noble fruit. Buried in university, court, and convent libraries, covered with the dust of centuries, were found treasures of literature, now pronounced by competent scholars to be, in some respects, equal to the great classic masterpieces. Of these, the oldest is the German poetic Gospel harmony, called by its first editor, Professor Schmeller, of Munich, "*Heliand*" (the Saviour). It was written about 830 A. D., and published just a thousand years later. "This poem," says Vilmar, "composed by a Saxon, or, perhaps, in old-epic fashion, by several authors—and several traces point to this conclusion—relates the life of Jesus Christ according to the combined reports of the four Gospels, and is, by far, the most excellent, perfect, and sublime Christian poem of all nations and all times; in truth, apart from its Christian subject, it is in general one of the most glorious works of poetry that human genius has created; and in some parts, descriptions, and features, it may safely challenge comparison with the Homeric songs. It is the only true Christian epic."[1] About thirty years after the *Heliand* another poetic Gospel harmony was written, this time in Alsace. Its author was a Benedictine monk, Ottfried, of Weissenburg. Far inferior as a poem to the *Heliand*, it has decided claims to our interest and attention. "The poem is invaluable as a sample of old High German, and, if possible, even more valuable on account of the uncommon care and precision with which the metres have been treated, so that, if our German prosody is to be scientific, we can to this day gather its fundamental rules only from this work of Ottfried. Alliteration Ottfried replaces by the musical principle which has remained dominant since—rhyme. His work is the first written in rhyme, and at the same time the standard for all succeeding centuries."[2] About 1300 A. D., the great epic the "Lay of the Nibelungs" was combined into one poem; its component songs, detected with wonderful skill by Karl Lachmann, had been sung probably for centuries before by travelling bards and rhapsodists. To emphasize its merits is useless; they are acknowledged by all. It seems strange that this poem, "the chief gem in the poetic crown of Germany," should have been forgotten, should have been unknown for ages; stranger still that, when at last published by a Swiss pedagogue, named Müller, the great Frederick of Prussia, poet and politician and warrior, to reward him for his work, wrote: "You think entirely too well of these things. In my opinion, they are not worth a shot of powder. I should not tolerate them in my library, but should throw them

[1] Vilmar, Geschichte der Deutschen National Literatur, fr. 29.
[2] Vilmar, l. c., 31.

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out." Frederick was a better judge of powder than of poems; still, he was a fair representative of eighteenth-century enlightenment, and gives us a clue why these men could not appreciate the Middle Ages.

Epics of the Nibelungen class, there were many; at least a dozen or fifteen have come down to us, whole or in part; the Lamentation of the Nibelungs, the Song of Hildebrand, Sigfrid, King Laurin, the Battle of Ravenna (*Raben Schlacht*), Rosegarden, King Rother, and King Otnit, may be mentioned as some of these poems. But, next to the Song of the Nibelungs for merit, a poem of singular beauty and attractiveness, portraying "the strict fidelity, suffering humility, and ever-dignified nobility of a German woman," comes Gudrun, a German Odyssey, next to the Nibelungen Iliad. Besides these poems, celebrating the heroes of the great invasion of the Roman Empire, we have a cycle of epics dealing with the exploits of Charlemagne and his paladins; another singing of King Arthur and his knights; and the Legend of the Holy Land, as well as romantic tales of Alexander and Æneas. The finest of these epics is the "Parzival" of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the greatest German poet of his age, the friend of Hermann of Thüringen, St. Elizabeth's father-in-law. At Hermann's court, also, we find other distinguished votaries of the epic muse, like Hartmann von der Aue, as well as the greatest of the minnesingers, Walther von der Vogelweide. Much of their poetry has been translated into modern German, and its high excellence has been most freely recognized. And yet these men lived and sang in the "dark" ages, at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century.

We pass from Germany to France. Hardly had the old rustic Roman, transformed by the German influence of the Franks, become French, when we find it used for literary purposes. The tenth century furnishes us the Song of St. Eulalie, a life of St. Leger, and a poem on the Passion. Then follow the *Chansons de Gestes*, heroic poems singing of the noble deeds of the legendary or historic families of France. Even the eleventh century furnishes us one example of these epics, the *Chanson de Roland*, edited for the the first time by M. Michel, in 1837. It treats of an episode of the great Charles's wars with the Saracens, and is the oldest as well as the most interesting of the poems dealing with that subject. *Amis et Amiles*, a *chanson* of 3500 lines, written in the twelfth century, was one of the most popular mediæval poems, though its interest is mainly domestic. The wealth of this poetry revealed by modern research is amazing. Every hero had his Homer in those days, it would seem. Roland, Guillaume d'Orange, Huon de Bordeaux, Renant de Montauban, and dozens of others, found

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trouvères to write and *jongleurs* to recite their glories. And these numerous works are far from being without merit. "Their versification is pleasing to the ear," says Mr. Saintsbury, "and their language, considering its age, is of surprising strength, expressiveness, and even wealth." "It is neither poor in vocabulary nor lacking in harmony of sound. It is, indeed, more sonorous and stately than the classical French language was from the seventeenth century to the days of Victor Hugo."[1]

The *Chansons de Gestes* were followed very soon by the Romances of King Arthur and of Alexander the Great, many of which were subsequently versified. How well they lend themselves to poetic treatment was shown not only by the German poets of the thirteenth century, but also in our own day by Lord Tennyson. The old French romances rank high as works of literature. "The peculiarity of what may be called their atmosphere is marked. An elaborate and romantic system of mystical religious sentiment, finding vent in imaginative and allegorical narrative, a remarkable refinement of manners, and a combination of delight in battle and devotion to ladies, distinguish them. This is, in short, the romantic spirit, or, as it is sometimes called, the spirit of chivalry; and it cannot be too positively asserted that the Arthurian romances communicate it to literature for the first time, and that nothing like it is found in the classics."[2] To the *chansons* and romances must be added the *fabliau*, a species of poem partaking of the ballad and the Æsopic fable. We must also mention the lyric poetry, both of the Provençal troubadours and the Northern French trouvères. Year after year scholars discover and print more of those ancient literary treasures, and year after year they accumulate more proof that the Middle Ages from the tenth to the fifteenth century were far from being a barbarous and barren age in literature.

We see the Middle Ages had truly a culture. Of course that culture was very different from ours. Was it, therefore, in every respect inferior to modern culture? Let us hear the opinion of a scholar well acquainted with both, brought up wholly under modern influences, so to say, steeped in them, a non-Catholic, but a fair and open-minded critic, Prof. Paulsen:

"Between the culture of the Middle Ages and modern culture there is an important difference: it is that the former was what the latter is not—popular; . . . . it was the property of the whole people: modern culture, on the contrary, belongs to the learned. In the Middle Ages all had one language, one poetry, one faith, one Church, one art; since the fifteenth century the body of the people has been split into two classes, the learned and the un-

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[1] Saintsbury, Hist. of French Lit., pp. 23, 24.
[2] Saintsbury, l. c., p. 38.

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learned, or, in modern parlance, the cultured and the uncultured, who live side by side, but not with one another; nor do they live the same life. . . . . Since the end of the Middle Ages unity of language has perished from the midst of the people. The learned, *i.e.*, the bearers of culture, since that time spoke a language different from that of the uneducated masses. True, in the Middle Ages, too, the language of learning, and in part of public life, was a foreign language. But mediæval Latin was not the language of a foreign people; it grew upon the soil, and drew its life from the life of the age; it did not change the turn of mind of those who used it. It was not the reason for pride and display, but a necessary instrument for international and learned intercourse. Those who spoke it did not become strangers to the life of the masses. The clerics, who knew and used it, held the same views of life and the world as the people in general. . . . . But at the end of the sixteenth century no one, unless he was forced to speak in German on the commonest matters of every day life, could express his thoughts without borrowing from the Latin. Though perhaps the introduction of some Latin purple patches was due to the desire of showing that the writer did not belong to the rabble, yet not unfrequently he was led to use the Latin because it was handy, whilst he was at a loss for the proper German expression. The contempt for the German language, and its neglect during the sixteenth century in consequence of the schools being carried on in Latin, made it possible for the French language to take possession of the upper classes. For a time it seemed as if the German tongue had died out as a vehicle of culture. When at last it began to be revived for literary uses its connection with the living, spoken language had been almost snapped. Luckily Luther's translation of the Bible had saved a great part of the mediæval German language for better times. . . . . Can we close our eyes to the fact that our German literature, and especially the so-called classical German literature, is, to a great extent, strange to the life of the people, and that it will remain so? that the plastic arts among us are exotics, which have never struck root among the people, and which are kept alive by arbitrary means and by imitation? and that our law and political science are learned creations, and not the outcome of the nation's life? nay, that even religion and religious life among us have an artificial, half political, half erudite, character? Can we deny that in this respect the Middle Ages were more blessed? Then the life of the whole people was based on one general view of the world and of life: the same ideals of heroism and sanctity filled the souls of all: art spoke a language understood by all, for it gave form and reality to the ideals that lived in their hearts, and the Church and her sacred ceremonies co-ordi-

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nated the life of all with the same world of ideas. With the Renaissance began the great schism."[1]

Such is Prof. Paulsen's view of mediæval and modern culture. But Paulsen is far from standing alone; his views, as he remarks himself, are the views of Wackernagel and Pfeiffer, learned Germanists and profound scholars. They, if any, had penetrated deeply into German mediæval literature and the life of the German people in those times. They plodded, they studied, they searched, they sifted, and they saw—what? The frightful images of barbarism, ignorance, superstition, and darkness? the caricature of learning and fainting shadow of national life? No. They saw what Paulsen saw. They saw that most of the fearful pictures of the dark ignorance of the Middle Ages, formerly accepted as correct, were mirages; they saw that many of the current descriptions were myths.

THE LONDON POOR.

TOWN poverty and country poverty are different. Poverty in the country means simplicity—"a dinner of herbs with contentment";—but poverty in towns means starvation, *plus* dirt, degradation and disease. London being perhaps the largest town, —though it is but a combination of small towns,—the contrast between its spirit and the spirit of the country is more pronounced than is the same contrast in other kingdoms. Rural France is in touch with brilliant Paris, so far as borrowed ideas can be assimilated; rural Italy is, or was, in touch with Papal Rome, so far as ordinary Catholic sentiments can be diffused; but between London and the English villages there is absolutely nothing in common, unless it be the "doing nothing" on a Sunday. London life, among the poor, is one unceasing bitter struggle, unrelieved by any sunshine, save that of children's smiles, yet with a constant, painful yearning for better days.

We speak of course of the poorest class of Londoners; not of the average successful workman or artisan, but of the thousands whose life-long element is want. That word, want, does not mean only destitution, it means the craving for most of the necessaries of life. Such craving is the normal mood of scores of thousands.

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[1] Paulsen, l. c., pp. 291–293.

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