

tude away by their enthusiasm and the novelty and nobility of their principles and mission. Self-sacrificing love, for the sake of Christ, was the sum of their lives, and the only reward they asked, food and shelter. For a time they kept nobly true to the spirit of their rule. The towns of the Middle Ages were wretched in the extreme; fever and pestilence were permanently established in them, as in modern cities of the East; leprosy had its special houses, and little care was taken of the wretched inmates. But the Gray Brothers at once betook themselves to the most miserable quarters of the boroughs and to the foul leper houses, to alleviate suffering, and, if possible, remove it. Barefooted by day, they lay without a pillow by night. Their houses were as mean as the wretched hovels around them. True work, honestly done, had its ample reward in enthusiastic admiration.

Their preaching, ready, fluent, and familiar, was no less a wonder. The ignorant mass-priest, who depended on his fees, had been almost the only ecclesiastic with whom the lower towns-people had hitherto come in contact. The services of the Church were in an unknown language, the ritual was unmeaning, and the pictures or statues on the church walls needed an explanation which they did not receive. In contrast with this the friar addressed the crowd with fervid appeals, rough wit, or telling anecdote, as best suited the moment, with no attempt at studied harangues. It was a religious revolution, and gave the Church another lease of popular favor.

But they did not long confine themselves to preaching or tending the sick; they soon aimed also at higher flights. The universities were in their first glory: humble enough compared with their state to-day, but immensely popular. Thirty thousand students are said to have attended Oxford at one time. The revival of mental activity, however, was dangerous, and the friars resolved to check, or at least to direct, it. Their care of the sick had soon drawn them to study the

physical sciences, and their preaching led them to study theology. In 1230 the Dominicans had already gained a theological professorship in the University of Paris, and the Franciscans soon after secured another. The schools of both, at both the English universities, became famous. Theology resumed its old supremacy, and for a time such men as Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ockham gave a true glory to the new orders.

But the corruption of the rest of the Church ere long invaded the ranks of the Brethren, and speedily brought them to its own miserable level. Even so early as 1243 Matthew Paris writes of them: "It is only twenty-four years since they built their first houses in England, and now they raise buildings like palaces, and show their boundless wealth by making them daily more sumptuous, with great rooms and lofty ceilings, impudently transgressing the vows of poverty which are the very basis of their order. If a great or rich man is like to die, they take care to crowd in, to the injury and slight of the clergy, that they may hunt up money, extort confessions, and make secret wills, always seeking the good of their order as their one end. They have got it believed that no one can hope to be saved if he do not follow the Dominicans or Franciscans. They are restless in trying to get privileges, to get the ear of kings and princes, to be chamberlains, treasurers, bridesmen, match-makers, and agents of papal extortion. In their preaching they either flatter or abuse without bounds, or reveal confessions, or gabble nonsense." The monks and the clergy soon came to regard them as their mutual enemies, and the peace of the towns was often disturbed by riots caused by their mutual hatreds. X