

the beginning of which period Lord Bacon observed, with not more severity than correctness, that "the sciences which we profess have flowed almost entirely from the Greeks; for those which the Roman or Arabian, or still later writers, have added, are but few, and these few of but little moment; and, whatever they may be, are built upon the foundation of what the Greeks invented; so that the judgment, or rather the prophecy of the Egyptian priest, concerning the Greeks, is by no means inapplicable, 'that they should always continue boys, nor possess either the antiquity of science, nor the science of antiquity.'"

It remained for this extraordinary character, who thus fairly estimated in his own day the value of ancient and modern learning, to break through the spell which fatally pressed upon it, and seemed to prohibit all farther progress. It is to Bacon, and almost to Bacon alone, that we are indebted, if not for the scientific discoveries that have enriched the last two centuries, and struck home to every man's business and bosom, at least for that mode of generalizing the laws of nature, and of connecting the various branches of the different arts and sciences, which have chiefly contributed to those discoveries; which have called mankind from the study of words to the study of things, and have established from the book of nature the truth of that maxim, which had hitherto only loosely floated in the books of the poets, that

All are but parts of one stupendous whole.

It was my intention, in proof of this assertion, to have taken a brief survey, even before we closed the present lecture, of the shifting scenes of science and literature from the decline of the Roman empire to their re-establishment in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; to have given a glance at them in their retreat amid the eastern and western caliphats, in what have usually been called the dark ages of the world, extending from the fifth, but especially from the seventh to the fifteenth century; to have contemplated them on their reappearance and first spread, their resurrection and restoration to life and action, under the fostering providence of the illustrious houses of Medici, Urbino, Gonzaga, and Este; from which last, the most ancient and most distinguished of the whole, our own royal family derive their descent; to have surveyed them as basking under the patronage of Leo X.; but especially as they were affected by the wonderful and all-controlling influence of the Reformation which occurred during his papacy; and to have compared the character they then assumed, with that which they exhibit in our own day;—but, interesting as the subject is, I am compelled by want of time to postpone it till our next lecture, when I shall return to the subject, and carry it forward as the period will allow.

I shall only farther observe, that, on the first reviviscence of literature, it was chiefly limited to classical and philosophical subjects, and confined to the courts of princes, or the walls of universities, which were now establishing in almost every state of Europe; the classical or ornamental branches being mostly cultivated in the courts, and the speculative or philosophical in the schools. And such, with little variation, continued to be the course of learning, till the appearance of that great luminary in the hemisphere of letters to whom I have just adverted. No sooner, however, had the writings of Bacon, and of other characters of a similar comprehensiveness of mind, who co-operated in his views, become diffused, than institutions of another class were found wanting:—a something that might fill up the space between the cloistered scholar and the irrecondite citizen: the dry principles of speculative science, and the living practice of the artist and the mechanic. And hence, academies and societies for natural knowledge became organized and incorporated—museums were founded—taste, ingenuity, and invention commenced a happy intercourse—the general results of their communications were, for the most part, periodically published, and the great mass of mankind became more generally enlightened than in any former period of the world.

* Nov. Org.

But a mode of acquiring a familiar and systematic initiation into the general circle of the arts and sciences was still felt desirable for the body of the people; a sort of rudimental education, by which they might be able to assist and appropriate the knowledge that was flowing around them in every direction; that might call forth their own energies and resources, and reflect with increased lustre the light in which they were walking. And hence have arisen these scientific schools which are now commonly known by the name of Institutions; and especially, if I mistake not, the school I have the honour of addressing.

An establishment of this kind, to be perfect, should be possessed of a library adequate to every inquiry—a laboratory and a museum of equal extent, and a course of instruction commensurate with the whole circle of the sciences. Such an establishment, however, is not to be expected; and especially in our own country, where the government is seldom solicited for assistance, and the sole endowment results from the joint patronage and contribution of individuals. All that remains for us, therefore, is to make the best use of the means that are in our power, and to carry them to the utmost extent they will reach; and I can honestly congratulate the members of the Institution before me with having, in this respect, conscientiously acted up to the fullest limits of their duty, and of having rather set an example than followed one; for it is a matter of notoriety to the world at large, that there is no other Institution in which the same measure of income has been extended to the same measure of acquiring knowledge, whether by books or by lectures.

LECTURE XII.

ON THE MIDDLE OR DARK AGES.

If we examine the history of Europe in a literary point of view, we shall find it consist of three distinct periods—an era of light, of darkness, and of light restored. To the first of these periods I directed your attention in the preceding lecture. We noticed the general state of literature and the mode of education adopted in Greece and Rome, at the most splendid epochs of these celebrated republics, and briefly compared them with the means of acquiring knowledge in our own day; and we at the same time glanced rapidly at the intervening space, or middle period; or rather only touched upon a few of its leading features, from an impossibility of compressing even a miniature sketch of its history into the limits of a single lecture; though it may be remembered that I threw out a pledge of returning to the subject on the present occasion, and of investigating it in a more regular detail.

A part of that pledge I shall now, by your permission, endeavour to redeem; by taking a survey of the general literature, or ignorance of mankind, which characterized that wonderful era which has usually been described by the name of the DARK, OR MIDDLE AGES; and which extends from the fall of Rome before the barbarous arms of the Goths, in the fifth century, to the fall of Constantinople before the equally barbarous arms of the Turks, in the fifteenth century; thus comprising a long afflictive night of not less than a thousand years; yet occasionally illuminated by stars of the first magnitude and splendour: and big with the important events of the sack of Alexandria and the destruction of its library; the triumph and establishment of the Saracens, and their expulsion from Spain; the devastation of Europe, and the overthrow of its ancient governments in favour of the feudal system, by successive currents of barbarians from the north-west of Asia, pouring down under the various names of Alans, Huns, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths, or Eastern and Western Goths; sometimes in separate tides, and sometimes in one

united and overflowing flood; the deliriums of chivalry, of romance, and crusading; the introduction of duels and ordeals; of monkery and the inquisition; the separation of the eastern from the western church; and the first gleams of the Reformation, under the fearless and inflexible Wyckliff. And, in our own country, the descent of Hengist on the Isle of Thanet; the establishment of the Saxon octarchy; the general sovereignty of Egbert; the glorious and golden reign of Alfred; the conquest of the Norman invader; the bloody feuds of the houses of York and Lancaster; and their termination, on the union of the two families, after the memorable battle of Bosworth.

This will lead us to the fair epoch of the revival of letters under the patronage of Leo X., and the still more commanding influence of the Reformation; a period, however, upon which it will be impossible for us to touch in the course of the present inquiry, though I shall still bear it in memory, and request your attention to it on a subsequent opportunity.

The literary taste and pursuits of Rome continued nearly the same under her emperors as during her republican form of government. Athens was still the alma mater of the higher ranks of her youth; and, as she increased in opulence and in luxury, she resigned herself more fully to those Grecian blandishments which were despised under the commonwealth.

On the death of Constantius, which took place in our own city of York, in the year of our Lord 306, for even Britain had at this time bowed down, through a large extent of her territory, before the mistress of the world; Constantine, his favourite son, was, agreeably to his father's will, proclaimed emperor in his stead. Galerius, however, who was co-emperor with Constantius, opposed this regulation, and endeavoured to secure the whole of the empire to himself; while various other chieftains taking advantage of the public confusion, not less than four competitors assumed the imperial purple at the same time. It was the good fortune of Constantine to triumph over all his rivals; and having at length securely seated himself on a throne whose dominion extended over almost the whole of Europe, and a considerable part of Asia and Africa, he resolved upon building a new imperial city, more immediately in the centre of his dominions; and for this purpose chose the spot of the ancient Byzantium, than which the whole globe could not offer a more auspicious situation, whether in regard to climate, commercial intercourse, or defence. The walls of Byzantium rose on the Thracian coast of the Propontis, or modern Sea of Marmora; secured by the key of the Thracian Bosphorus on the left, which gave an entrance to the Euxine, and the whole interior of the north; and by the key of the Hellespont, or Dardanelles, as it is now called, on the right, directly opening into the Archipelago, and communicating with every other part of the world; the whole of civilized Europe lying immediately behind, and Asia and Africa immediately in front; surrounded by all those scenes which had been richest in harvests of Grecian glory, and had chiefly contributed to immortalize the Grecian name. The language was Greek, the country was Greek, and the customs and manners still possessed that mildness and suavity which so peculiarly characterized this polished people; and which, in no inconsiderable degree, have descended to the present hour. The city thus erected the Roman emperor called, after his own name, Constantinople; he removed the court to it from the old metropolis, and by the enormous sums he expended upon it, and the encouragement and patronage he lavished upon settlers of every kind, and especially upon men of letters and artists, he beheld it, in a few years, rivalling the magnificence, and even the extent of Rome itself. He endowed it with the same rights, immunities, and privileges; and established an equal senate, equal magistracies, and other authorities, and declared it to be the metropolis of the East, as Rome was that of the West. Constantinople is also worthy of attention on another account, as being the first city in the world that was dedicated by the authority of the government to the service of the Christian religion.

The fact of Constantine's conversion is too important, and the means by which it was accomplished too singular, to be passed by on the present occa-

sion; and that I may not be suspected of exaggeration or undue embellishment, I shall give it you in the plain, unvarnished words of the very cautious and authentic writers of the Ancient Universal History.

In describing the war in which Constantine was involved with Maxentius, his most powerful competitor for the empire, they thus observe, at the same time giving their authorities, as they proceed, with an indefatigable research, and weighing them with a scrupulous circumspection which has rarely been equalled in later times:—"In this war Providence had something in view, infinitely more important than the rescuing of Rome from the tyranny of Maxentius; nothing less than the delivering of the Church from the cruel persecution under which it had groaned for the space of near three hundred years. Constantine had inherited of his father some love and esteem for the Christians; for the first use he made of his authority was to put a stop to the persecution in the provinces subject to him. However, he had not yet shown any inclination to embrace a religion which he both honoured and esteemed; but in the war with Maxentius, apprehending that he stood in need of an extraordinary assistance from heaven, he began seriously to consider with himself what deity he should implore as his guardian and protector. He revolved in his mind the fallacious answers given by the oracles to other princes, and the success that had attended his father Constantius in all his wars, who despised the many gods worshipped by the Romans, and acknowledged only one Supreme Being. At the same time he observed, that such of his predecessors as had persecuted the Christians, the adorers of this God, had miscarried in most of their undertakings, and perished by an unfortunate and untimely end; whereas his father, who countenanced and protected them, had, in all his wars, been attended with uncommon success, and ended his life in the arms of his children.

"Upon these considerations he resolved to have recourse to the God of his father, and adhere to him alone. To him, therefore, he addressed himself with great humility and fervour, beseeching him to make himself known to him, and to assist him in his present expedition. Heaven heard his prayer in a manner altogether miraculous; which, however incredible it may appear to some, Eusebius assures us he received from the emperor's own mouth, who solemnly confirmed the truth of it with his oath. As he was marching at the head of his troops in the open fields, there suddenly appeared to him AND THE WHOLE ARMY, a little after midday, a pillar of light above the sun, in the form of a cross, with this inscription:—

“CONQUER BY THIS.”*

"The emperor was in great pain about the meaning of this wonderful vision till the following night; when our Saviour, appearing to him, with the same sign that he had seen in the heavens, commanded him to cause such another to be framed, and to make use of it in conquering his enemies. The next morning Constantine imparted to his friends what he had seen; and sending for the ablest artificers and workmen, ordered them to frame a cross of gold and precious stones, according to the directions which he gave them. Constantine being, after the miraculous vision, immutably determined to adore that God alone who had appeared to him, sent for several bishops in order to be instructed by them in the mysteries of their religion, and in several particulars of the late apparition. He hearkened to them with the utmost respect, and believed what they told him of the divinity, incarnation, cross, and death of our Saviour, reading with great attention the Holy Scriptures, and consulting in his doubts the bishops, whom for that purpose he kept constantly about him."†

* *Tēro vica.*

† *Rom. Hist. b. iii. ch. xxv. vol. xv. p. 554, 8vo. edit. 1747.* The account is taken from Eusebius; and by some writers, who find it easier to ridicule than to weigh testimony, it has been called a pious fiction; but with what justice, the following remarks will sufficiently show. First, Constantine and Eusebius are allowed by all parties to have been men of general honesty and intelligence, to give them no higher cha-

This extraordinary event having preceded his determination to build a new metropolis, he expressly dedicated the city, as I have already observed, when on the point of being completed, to the service of the religion he had so lately embraced: solemnly consecrating it, in conformity with the custom of the times, to the Virgin Mary, according to Cedrenus, but according to Eusebius, to the God of Martyrs.

Upon his death-bed Constantine divided the empire into five parts; his three sons and two of his nephews being allowed to share the imperial domains between them. The building of Constantinople was a severe blow to the splendour and opulence of Rome; and this partition of the imperial authority was an equal blow to the extent and integrity of the empire at large. The tributary nations of every quarter, as soon as they found that the consolidated force of the empire was thus frittered away, were in arms, with a view of regaining their liberty or of enlarging their boundaries. The Franks and other German tribes broke into Gaul; the Sarmatians into Pannonia, or what is now called Hungary; the Picts, Scots, and Saxons, into Britain; and the Austrians into Africa.

To oppose this general ravage, the imperial dominions were once more consolidated, and not long afterward, in the reign of Valentinian, who admitted his brother Valens to an equal participation in the purple with himself, regularly divided into two distinct empires, under the names of the Eastern or Greek, and the Western or Latin empire; the former comprehending Illyrium and Pannonia, or Slavonia and Hungary as they are now denominated, Thrace, Macedon, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and all the eastern provinces, having Constantinople for its metropolis; and the latter embracing Gaul, Italy, Africa, Spain, and Britain, its metropolis being ancient Rome.

The greater degree of energy manifested by the successors to the Eastern empire preserved its boundaries for a considerable period of time free from much mutilation; but the empire of the West, in which Rome, though once more encouraged by the presence and patronage of a splendid court, was never able to recover from the blow it had received by the building of Constantinople, continued to droop from its first establishment. Its successes were few and trivial, and such as rather tended to invite new hordes of barbarians into the heart of its fairest provinces than to deter from aggression by examples of signal vengeance and severity.

The tide of incursion, as I have already observed, flowed almost entirely from the north. Beyond the Tanais, and immediately crossing the Imaus or Caf of the Caucasus, extending nearly from the banks of this river to the Sea of Japan, lay scattered, at the commencement of the Christian era, a variety of tribes unknown to the conquering sword of the Roman legions, and distinguished by the names of Vandals, Sueves, Alans, Goths, Huns, Turks, and Tartars. Of all these the Huns appear to have given the earliest proofs of restlessness and love of power: they first pressed forward upon the Goths,

racter. Secondly, Constantine declares that the vision of the cross and of the pillar of light were beheld by the whole army as well as by himself. Thirdly, Eusebius affirms that he gave an account of the whole to the artists for whom he immediately sent, on the morning after his explanatory dream, to construct a standard ornamented with a copy of the golden cross he had beheld and enriched with jewels, according to the direction he gave them. Fourthly, he tells us that Constantine narrated the same statement to the bishops whom he had assembled to give him spiritual advice on the occasion. And fifthly, that he afterward gave the whole history of it, in like manner, in his own person, to Eusebius himself; and confirmed the narration with an oath.

All this may, indeed, be said to be nothing more than the declaration of Eusebius alone; but when we add to these remarks, sixthly, that Eusebius published his account in the general face of those to whom he asserts that the emperor communicated it at the time, and in the face of hundreds, perhaps of thousands of the army, who he also asserts beheld the glorious vision, the cross and its motto, as well as the emperor; and that not an individual ventured to step forward and contradict him: and when, lastly, we take into consideration the undisputed fact, that the figure of the cross portrayed in the pillar of light was copied, together with its motto, and placed on every banner of the imperial army from this time forth; and that all the branches of the imperial family became converts to Christianity from the same period;—when all these points are taken into consideration, a case is made out, not only that sufficiently vindicates the veracity of Eusebius, but that probably demands a more miraculous power to shut the heart against its admission, than that of the miracle which is its subject-matter. See Euseb. Vit. Const. lib. i. cap. xxvii.—xxx. p. 431—423.

who, dispossessed of their native regions, bore down upon the Vandals, Sueves, and Alans; and these, flying before them, entered into Gaul, and from Gaul advanced into Spain; and on being driven from Spain passed over and invaded Africa; thus making way for a farther advance of the Goths and Huns into the centre of the western empire, which they prosecuted sometimes in conjunction and sometimes alone. Hence, even Italy was in several instances overrun, and Rome itself taken and sacked by the Goths under Alaric, towards the beginning of the fifth century; while the Goths themselves were in their turn, about forty years afterward, obliged to fly before the victorious arms of Attila, the Hunnish leader, or to enlist under his banners; a barbarous chieftain, who, descending from the wild and barren mountains of Scythia, spread terror and devastation over almost the whole of Europe; and, possessing a political authority of as extensive a range towards the east, proved a formidable enemy to every sovereign from China to Gaul. The camp of this adventurous and successful soldier, when he was stationary, was pitched on the northern side of the Danube, between the Teiss and the Carpathian mountains; his court was unrivalled in splendour and magnificence, and his empire extended through a range of not less than seven thousand miles in length. On the death of Attila, this enormous but ephemeral empire, which had only "grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength," insensibly crumbled away. "The Huns were melted down into the nations which they conquered; and, if the modern Hungarians be excepted, whose descent from them is rather a plausible conjecture than an historical fact supported by conclusive evidence, few vestiges of them are now discoverable either in Europe or Asia."*

The history of the Roman empire from this period may be comprised in a few words. Towards the close of the 5th century, during the reign of Augustulus, who had regained possession of the central provinces, it was overthrown by the Herulians under Odoacer, who were themselves shortly afterward expelled from Italy by Theodoric king of the Ostrogoths. About the year 568, the Lombards, issuing from the mark of Brandenburg, invaded the Higher Italy, as it was named, and founded a powerful state, called the empire of the Lombards; the Middle and Lower Italy being added to the empire of the east by the brilliant conquests of Justinian's celebrated but ill-requited generals Belisarius and Narses. These, however, were afterward wrenched from it, and incorporated into the new empire of the Lombards; from whom the whole passed, together with almost the entire amplitude of polished Europe, into the hands of Charlemagne, the second sovereign of the second dynasty of the Franks; a people that, having subdued all Gaul, had established themselves in that country for about three centuries already; and had, through the greater part of that period, professed the Christian religion. Charlemagne entered Rome in triumph, and was crowned emperor of the Romans, with great pomp and festivity, towards the close of the eighth century.

While such was the series of misfortunes that attended, and at length totally subverted, the western empire, that of the east had to strive with difficulties of another kind, and which produced a still greater change in the political aspect of the world.

The nations by whom the successive conquests of Europe had been effected proceeded, as we have already beheld, from different, though contiguous tracts of country, spoke different languages, and were under the command of different leaders. Yet, having originated from a like cradle, from the solitude of mountain-fastnesses, and the savage wild of precipitous scenery, nursed in the midst of snows and howling tempests, they appear to have established, in almost every state which they subdued, nearly the same legislative system: a system known by the name of the Feudal Law, and the introduction of which into Europe constitutes one of the most prominent features of European history.

* Butler, Hor. Bibl. part. ii. p. 85.

It was about the middle of the period we have thus far contemplated, in the year of our Lord 568, that Mahomet was born in Arabia: and a period more auspicious to his unrivalled craft and overtowering ambition could not possibly have been produced by any concurrence of circumstances. The barbarians of the north had just completed their conquest over regular monarchy; the western empire was tottering to its foundation, while the eastern was shorn of its limits, and weakened by internal oppressions. Yet neither the extent of the territories of the barbarian powers, nor their respective forms of government, were definitely settled; while, at the same time, the fury which had accompanied their progress being exhausted, they had sunk into a state of political lethargy, and no bond of union or co-operation existed between them. Were we to search for that period of the Christian era in which there was least of order, least of power, least of science, and least of intercourse in Europe, we should be compelled to pitch upon the century which immediately preceded, and that which immediately followed, the commencement of the Hegira.

Mahomet flourished in the middle of this period. Deriving his immediate descent from the patriarch Abraham, through the line of Ishmael, and, perhaps, eldest son of eldest son, from the commencement of the chain, he was a man of unbounded ambition, most enterprising courage, insinuating address, and instructed in all the science of his day. He beheld his own country without any fixed principles of religion, and ignorantly intermixing the rites of Judaism with the doctrines of Christianity; he beheld the professors of the Christian church engaged in perpetual disputes upon inexplicable mysteries; and excommunicating and massacring each other, as they alternately possessed the power, upon a mere difference of recondit or speculative points. It was the precise moment for the invention of a new creed, and he invented one accordingly. With a mastery of craft that has never been equalled, even in our own eventful age, he infused into the heterogeneous mass a charm adapted to captivate every party and every passion; and, to destroy every doubt of success, he united the power of the sword to that of the new faith, and threw open the gates of Paradise, and all the enjoyments of the beatified, to every soldier who should fall under the banners of the crescent.

Such a religion, launched forth at such a period, and aided by such auxiliaries, it was impossible to oppose by human means. It ran like lightning over the whole of Arabia, and equally subdued before it political friends and political foes. The states of Barbary were compelled to embrace it; the leaders of the Turks, the Mongul Tartars, and the Persians found it admirably adapted to their purpose, and embraced it voluntarily; all the Asiatic provinces of the eastern empire were overrun by the armies of the prophet himself, or his descendants, Abubeker and Omar: who, on succeeding to Mahomet, assumed, from respect and in reference to him, the subordinate title of Caliph, or Vicar. All Syria was invaded by the former for the express purpose, as he openly asserted, "of taking it out of the hands of the infidels;" and Jerusalem itself was captured by the latter, and rendered, shortly afterward, one of the principal bulwarks of the Saracens, as they were soon denominated among the Christian powers.

The doctrine fundamentally inculcated by the Saracen chiefs was, that "to fight for the faith is an act of obedience to God;" and on this account they characterized their ferocious and bloody ravages by the name of *holy wars*. And having been the first to adopt this absurd and contradictory term, they laid down a model, and offered at least an apology for the crusades. And such was the success of their enterprise, that in less than a century from the commencement of the Hegira, they spread the religion of Mahomet from the Atlantic Ocean to India and Tartary, and obtained the whole, or the greater part of the temporal, as well as the spiritual power in Syria, Persia, Egypt, Africa, and Spain. Spain, indeed, has since been rescued from their bondage; but the same general success continuing, the whole of the eastern empire was overturned, and Constantinople itself taken possession of in 1453; while, in

different directions, they have also pursued the same triumphant career over the kingdoms of Visapour and Golconda, in India; the islands of Cyprus, of Rhodes, and the Cyclades; and have made large territorial acquisitions in Tartary, Hungary, and Greece.

Such is a brief but afflictive sketch of the history of the world, during what has been appropriately denominated its dark ages, throughout which it may correctly be said, that

No light, but rather darkness visible,
Serr'd only to discover scenes of wo,
Regions of horror, doleful shades.

In effect, every thing concurred to introduce and establish a universal reign of ignorance and gloom: and I shall next proceed to notice more particularly a few of those causes which chiefly co-operated in producing so calamitous a result.

And the first that occurs in the course of the survey is, the sinister and contracted views, and the general repugnance to all science and polite learning that so strikingly distinguish that particular set of the barbarous tribes of the north, already noticed, by whom Europe was earliest overrun; all of whom, by a generic term, may be denominated Scandinavians. Judging of these from the only Scandinavian records which have descended to our own times, the fabulous fragments collected by Sæmond and Snorro, and which are respectively called Eddas, all their arts and inventions were rude, and all their passions and pursuits violent. They had poetry, but it was altogether of the terrible kind; the whole muster-roll of their mythology consisted of not more than from forty to fifty gods and goddesses, while those of Greece amounted, in Hesiod's time, to three thousand; and in that of Augustus, to thirty thousand. The same power who, under the name of Loke, was their Ahriman, or Principle of Evil, was also, for want of a larger establishment, their Momus, and their Mercury. As they had their war-songs and their war-speeches, they had also their Apollo; but, like the rest, he, too, was caparisoned with his javelin and his hauberk, and was a god of battles as well as of eloquence. The beatitudes of their paradise, those with which the most valiant of their heroes were rewarded after death, consisted, as we learn from the same bloody legends, in daily encounters of more than mortal fury: in the course of which the different combatants, mounted on fiery steeds, and clothed in resplendent armour, mutually wounded, and were wounded in return. Though, when the battle was over, they bathed in fountains of living water; and, being instantly healed, sat down to a sumptuous banquet, at which Oden, their chief deity, presided, and passed the hours of midnight in singing war-songs and drinking goblets of mead. Even the web of future events, woven by their three PARCÆ, was manufactured of strings of human entrails, the shuttles being formed of arrows dipped in gore, and the weights of the skulls of gasping warriors. It is to this fiction Mr. Gray alludes so finely, but, at the same time, so fearfully, in his Ode entitled "The Fatal Sisters."

Now the storm begins to lower
(Haste! the loom of hell prepare);
Iron sleet of arrowy shower
Hurles in the darken'd air.

Glittering lances are the loom
Where the web of death we strain;
Weaving many a soldier's doom,
Orkney's wo, and Randver's bane.

See the gristly texture grow!
'T is of human entrails made:—
And the weights that play below—
Each a gasping warrior's head.

Shafts for shuttles, dipp'd in gore,
Shoot the trembling cords along.
Sword!—that once a monarch bore,
Keep the tissue close and strong.

Horror covers all the heath:—
 Clouds of carnage blot the sun:—
 Sisters! weave the web of death:—
 Sisters! cease—the work is done!

The armies of the south of Asia, however, under the banners of Mahomet, were as little disposed, at least on the first spur of their fury, to attend to the voice of literature, as those of the north. Yemen, or Happy Arabia, till the time of this accomplished impostor, was equally the seat of polite learning and of courage. It was in climate and language, as well as in elegant pursuits, the Arcadia of the eastern world. Here the genius of poetry received his birth, and was nursed into maturity with fond and incessant attention. The Persians caught the divine art from the Arabians, as the Greeks afterward caught it from the Persians. The best pastoral poems in the world, or Casseidas, as they are called, and some of the best epic productions, are of Arabian growth. Before the era of Mahomet, a kind of poetical academy was established in this quarter, which used to assemble, at stated times, in a town named Ocadeh; where every tribe attended its favourite poet on his recital of the piece prepared for the occasion, and supported his aspiring pretensions. Those declared by the appointed judges most excellent were transcribed in characters of gold on Egyptian paper, and hung up in the temple of Mecca; and the seven which constitute the Moallakat, or suspended eclogues, best known in Europe, are well worthy of the celebrity they have attained.

On the appearance of Mahomet, Arabia thronged with poets of this description, and of high and justly distinguished characters; most of whom, moreover, to their honour, opposed his pretensions, and many of whom ridiculed them with a severity which he never either forgave or forgot. As he advanced, however, in success, poetry and eloquence, and scientific pursuits of every kind, became neglected and even despised, except so far as they could contribute to the promotion of his interest; the refined and elevated contests at Ocadeh were dropped, and every other passion was made to bend to the master-passion of the day. And hence, on the capture of Alexandria by the forces of Omar, the second in succession to Mahomet, the whole of its magnificent library, which had been accumulating from the time of its illustrious founder, was condemned to the flames, and served as fuel to the hot-baths for a period of six months. Amrus, the general of Omar's army, was a lover of letters, and the esteem he had contracted for Philoponus, one of the most learned Alexandrians of the day, strongly inclined him to spare this invaluable treasure. He wrote, therefore, to the Caliph in its behalf, and the answer received from him is well known from Abulpharagius's history: "As to the books of which you make mention, if there be contained in them what accords with the Book of God (meaning the Alcoran), the Book of God is all-sufficient without them: but if there be any thing repugnant to that book, we can have no need of them. Order them, therefore, to be all destroyed."

The wildfire of Asia enkindled an equal wildfire throughout Europe. Of the purity of the motive upon which the crusades were first founded there can be no doubt; but the unfortunate course they took, and the mistaken views and ferocious passions to which they gave birth, rendered them, on the part of the Christians, as hostile to the cause of science and literature, to say nothing of higher objects, as the fury of the Saracens. Every thing was forsaken and forgotten in the accomplishment of the only object with which Christendom was now pregnant; every knee bowed down before the standard of the Cross; the religion of love was converted into a religion of vengeance; the motto of Mecca became that of the Vatican; to fight for the faith was here also declared to be an act of obedience to God,* and every pulse beat high

* The following is a part of the famous bull of Pope Gregory IX., published in 1234, in which he exhorts and commands all good Christians to assume the Cross and join the expedition at that time preparing against the Holy Land. "The service to which mankind are now invited is an effectual atonement for the miscarriages of a negligent life. The discipline of a regular penance would have discouraged many offenders so much that they would have had no heart to venture upon it: but the HOLY WAR is a compendious method of discharging men from guilt, and restoring them to the Divine favour. Even if they die on their march, the intention will be taken for the deed; and many in this way may be crowned without fighting."—Collier's Eccl. vol. 1.

with an unconquerable determination to rescue the Holy Land, and trample upon its defilers.

Hence the origin of the various military orders which form so prominent a feature in the history of this period of the world; of the Knights of Malta, or of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, as they were at first called: the Knights Templars; the Teutonic Order; and the Order of St. Lazarus. Hence, too, that spirit of chivalry and romantic adventure, of tilts and tournaments; which, however it may have laid a basis for a thousand interesting tales of wild exploit and marvellous vicissitude,* had a tendency to change the sober order of things; to convert the patriotic citizen into a champion of fortune, and to work up the temperate reality of life into a fitful and visionary phrensy.

And hence, too, among those who confined their views altogether to subjects of personal devotion and still life, the extension, though not the rise (for they were already in existence), of religious orders, of pilgrimages, and hermit solitudes; of vows of celibacy and fasting, of severe penance and rigour; under the preposterous idea of propitiating the Supreme Being in favour of his own cause, by directly warring with the best and warmest, the most active and most benevolent passions and instincts which he has imprinted on the human heart for the multiplication of human happiness.

The crusades were numerous, but there are only seven that are worthy of particular notice. Of these, the first was led by Godfrey of Bouillon, in 1096, and was the only one that proved really successful; and that actually rescued, though only for a few years, the whole of Palestine from the grasp of the Mahometans. The third is chiefly celebrated for the chivalrous and enthusiastic valour with which it was prosecuted under our own Richard I. in 1189; and for the generous magnanimity of Saladin, who was at that time the Saracen king of Jerusalem. The last two were headed by St. Lewis in 1248 and 1270; and are principally notorious for the piety and valour which he displayed, and the misfortunes which attended him.

The scenes of havoc and barbarity to which this infatuating system gave rise on both sides are too shocking for narration, and too long to be recounted, even if we had time. The wild desire of foreign expurgation led to a similar desire of purging the church at home; and hence the establishment of the Holy Wars led to the establishment of the Holy Inquisition;—the extirpation of infidels to the extirpation of heretics. Hence the crusaders under Baldwin, count of France, when advancing towards Palestine, in 1204, by a sudden and delirious impulse, turned aside from their attack upon the Mahometans, and attacked the Greek Church in its stead, on account of its supposed heterodoxies; and took and ransacked Constantinople, instead of taking and restoring Jerusalem.

The brutal havoc which followed upon this expedition, and the destruction of all the finest statues and public monuments erected by Constantine on his founding the city, are described with much force and feeling by Nicetas the Chroniate, who was an eye-witness to the transaction, and who justly styles these crusading Vandals, τῶν κατὰ ἀνεραστοῖ βαρβαροῖ: † "Barbarians insensible to the fair and beautiful." He especially laments the destruction of the inimitable figures of Hercules and Helen, which, being constructed of brass, were melted down to pay the soldiers. The following is a part of his description of the latter statue, and I quote it from the translation of Mr. Harris, as a proof that Constantinople, even in the thirteenth century, had scholars not altogether destitute of literary taste. "What," says he, "shall I say of the beautiful Helen; of her who brought together all Greece against Troy? Does she mitigate these immitigable, these iron-hearted men? No—nothing like it could even she effect, who had before enslaved so many spectators with her beauty. Her lips," continues he, "like opening flowers, were gently parted, as if she were going to speak; and as for that graceful smile, which instantly met the beholder and filled him with delight, those elegant curva-

* Sainte-Palaye: Mémoires sur l'Ancienne Chevalerie, tom. i. p. 153, et seq. † Fabricii Biblioth. p. 412

tures of her eyebrows, and the remaining harmony of her figure; they were what no words can describe and deliver down to posterity."*

From the same demoniac spirit proceeded the infuriate crusade against the virtuous Albigeois or Albigenses in the thirteenth century; and the long and savage persecutions of the Waldenses or Vaudois, which continued almost without intermission for eighty or ninety years; and the depopulation of Spain, by an equal expulsion of Jews and Moors, when the Christian arms had once more proved successful in that country. It was during the crusade against the Albigeois (and it is the only anecdote I need advance in proof of the blind and indiscriminate fury with which these adventures were conducted) that, when a scruple arose among the crusading army as to the propriety of storming the city of Beziers, after having made preparation for so doing, in consequence of its being peopled with Catholics as well as with heretics, a dexterous casuist settled the point abruptly, by exclaiming, "Kill them all: God knows which are his own."†

Independently of any other cause, therefore, it must be obvious that the internal disputes of the Christian church itself, or rather that which was called Christian, in which every nation, and almost every individual, took a part, were alone sufficient to have repelled the progress of liberal and enlightened science. But beyond this, very soon after the introduction of Christianity, a fondness for the philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras prompted the more speculative ecclesiastics to investigate the mysteries of the divinity and humanity of our Saviour with too nice a curiosity; and hence the famous controversies of Praxeas, Sabellius, Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and various others, most of which led to very extensive proscriptions and persecutions. The schoolmen carried this itch for discussion into the most visionary subtleties of metaphysics, and acquired high-sounding titles by devoting the whole of their lives to an investigation of trifles that would disgrace a nursery. The bishops of Rome, after having advanced themselves to the popedom or supremacy of the Church, and invested themselves with territorial power, soon began to arrogate a temporal as well as a spiritual supremacy throughout Christendom; and hence the different courts of Europe, and at times even the emperors, were in a state of perpetual hostility with them; sometimes the emperors obtaining a triumph and deposing the popes, and sometimes the popes proving successful, and deposing the emperors; and hence the separation of the Greek church from that of Rome, in the middle of the ninth century, and of the English church towards the beginning of the sixteenth.

There is another cause, and it is the last I shall notice, which powerfully contributed to the night of error and ignorance, which overspread the moral horizon during the melancholy period before us; and that is, the general chaos which prevailed in the language of almost every nation of the civilized world, and the consequent want of some current medium of communication. It was a maxim of the Roman government, and of a most artful and politic character, and which, in our own day, has been closely copied by the crafty tyrant of France,‡ to plant its vernacular tongue wherever it planted its arms. Greece formed the only exception to this general rule; and, from its admitted superiority of taste and genius, was allowed to teach its conquerors instead of being taught by them. With this exception all the rest of Europe was latinized in a greater or less degree. The latinity, indeed, was of the most barbarous kind imaginable—for the dialect was, in almost every instance, a mongrel breed of Roman and aboriginal terms, with imperfect inflexions and unauthorized idioms, ready for any other change that chance might suggest or future conquest impose.

The barbarian conquerors of the north, however, seem to have cared as little about their respective dialects as about their religion; and hence, in both instances, they gave and took alternately with the different nations that submitted to their yoke. Yet, as fresh tides of invaders poured forward, the

* Harris, ii. 455, 456.

† Hist. des Troubadours, i. 193.

‡ This lecture was delivered in 1813, during the domineering power of Buonaparte.

Latin character progressively died away; and pure Latin was at length no longer known except as the language of the learned. Even in Rome itself it ceased to be spoken at the commencement of the seventh century; and the descendants of Cæsar and Cicero, and Virgil and Horace, were incapable of reading the immortal productions of their forefathers. It had already ceased for some ages to be employed in the Greek empire; having here been supplanted by the Greek tongue itself, the prevailing language of the country, and the fashionable language of every polite Roman, shortly after the removal of the imperial court to the eastern metropolis, in the reign of Constantine.

With respect to language, Mahomet pursued the same plan as the Romans. Wherever he conquered he introduced the Alcoran, and compelled every nation to read and to understand it in his own tongue. And hence, during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, the only genuine languages spoken throughout the civilized world were Greek and Arabic; both derived from a similar source, and of very early origin; and both existing without any very great degree of variation to the present hour; but neither of them employed at any time as a vernacular tongue, in the north or south, or even the west of Europe, except in Spain, where the Arabic was used during the dominion of the western caliph in that country. In consequence of which the latinity of the Spanish tongue is considerably tinged with Arabic terms and phraseologies, and possesses less resemblance to its Roman origin than the Portuguese, which, as being more remote, was less affected by the Saracen invasion and conquest.

The controversies of the church, and the subtle logomachies, or word-wars of the schoolmen, were conducted sometimes in Greek, but far more generally in Latin. And as only the former of these tongues was known to the people of the eastern, and neither of them to those of the western empire, the laity, in general, were completely cut off from all knowledge of the little and only learning that was alternately exercised, excepting as occasionally explained to them in whatever might happen to be their vernacular tongue.

Upon the fall of the Latin language, the rude dialect that was most approved in France and Italy was the Provençal, or that made use of in Provence and its vicinity; and it was hence exclusively employed by the *Troveurs* or *Troubadours*, as they were called, Provençal poets that about the commencement of the eleventh century began to flourish very numerously; and by the complimentary and licentious gayety of their incondite rhymes, to obtain an establishment in almost every court of Europe.

The times, indeed, were well calculated to promote their object; for there is, perhaps, hardly a vice that can be enumerated in the whole catalogue of moral evil that did not at this era of ignorance brutalize the human heart; and even the devotees themselves consisted, for the most part, of worn-out profligates, who had no longer the power of indulging their sensual gratifications. Such, among others, was William IX., count of Poictou, who was one of the earliest Provençal poets, and is equally celebrated for the unbridled debauchery of his earlier life, and the sanctimonious pretensions of his old age;—who at first founded an abbey for women of pleasure, and afterward converted it into a nunnery for the chaste and the pious; and who, on being rebuked and excommunicated in the midst of his infamous career, by his own bishop, seized him by the hair, and was on the point of despatching him, but suddenly stopped short, and exclaimed, "No—I have that hatred of thee, thou shalt never enter heaven through the assistance of my hand." "Nec cælum unquam intrabis meæ manus ministerio."*

Respecting another court and people in the neighbourhood of Poictou, we are told by an excellent contemporary writer, that all the men of rank were so blinded by avarice, that it might truly be said of them, in the words of Juvenal,

* Malmesbury, p. 96, fol. ed. 1596.