HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION

IN THE

FIFTH CENTURY.

TRANSLATED BY PERMISSION FROM THE FRENCH OF

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Page 11, *for* "gift" *read* "first."
92, *for* "agriculturalist" *read* "agriculturist.
118, *for* "altering" *read* "allowing."
140, *for* "avidity" *read* "aridity."
229, *for* "has" *read* "had."

gence, mysticism and dogmatism, divided the world of thought. We followed him along the ways which lead to the knowledge of God; and on scaling the vast heights of speculation to which he had been our guide, perceived that it was his metaphysical system which enlightened, dominated, and influenced the lofty minds of the Middle Age. For whilst the mysticism of the "Confessions" was to inspire the contemplation of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and draw from Bonaventura his "Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum," St. Augustine's

demonstration of God's existence was to be rigorously drawn out to its conclusions by St. Anselm, and to become an element in the "Summa Contra Gentes" of St. Thomas Aquinas, in which that great master undertook to prove, without recourse to Holy Writ, three hundred and thirty-six theses upon God, the soul, and their relations one with another.

But the remembrance of St. Augustine could not fill the domain of theology without descending into those arts which the Sacred Science inspired. Legend, as we know, had, as it were, seized upon the great doctor of Hippo, and woven around him an especial glory, as for instance in the vision of the sainted host granted to a monk in ecstasy, whose astonishment at not beholding St. Augustine was dissipated by the intelligence that his place was higher far, on heaven's very summit, and veiled by the rays of that Divinity which it was the work of his eternity to contemplate. Nor was it surprising that monks should cling to his memory thus, when even the Saracens, encamped on the ruins of Hippo, showed their devotion to its bishop; and considering that in our own day the Bedouins of the neighbourhood of Bona come every Friday to the spot which is marked by the ruins of the Basilica of St. Augustine, to honour a hero whom they call mysteriously *the great Roman*, or the great Christian. Painting, too, found in the history of this Saint an inexhaustible store of subject, and, amongst others, Benozzo Gonzali has depicted the incidents of his life in ten paintings in the church of San Gemignano—that charming town of Tuscany which defies the curiosity of the traveller from its rocky site—paintings which, with touching simplicity, unfold the various epochs in

his career, from the day on which he was taken by his parents to school at Tagaste, praying God that he might escape the rod.

Thus did the highest intellects of Christian Italy aim to draw near to that genius of old time. Petrarch, in writing his treatise on Contempt for the World, tormented by a passion that robbed his mind of all repose, imagined that he had St. Augustine for an interrogator, and that the Saint warned him that he was bound by two fetters of diamond, which he mistook for treasures, but which in reality were crippling him —namely, glory and love. Petrarch ardently defended his bonds, declaring that he bore them with joyful pride, and wished no one to lay hands on that Platonic love which had inspired his whole life, and raised him above the crowd. But the other, with a higher wisdom, derived from his Christian instincts, pointed to the perils of an undefined passion, which, though ostensibly ideal, would never have been conceived by him had not the beauty of his Laura appeared in sensible form. St. Augustine saw in it only a dangerous weakness, and prayed God that he might stay with the poet as a safeguard against himself, while Petrarch, at last yielding to the argument of the holy doctor, exclaimed, "Oh, may thy prayer be granted; may I, too, under Divine protection, come safe and whole from these long wanderings, feel the tempest of my mind subside, feel the world growing silent around me, and the temptations of fortune come to an end!"

But Christianity had not appeared for the sole purpose of promulgating the doctrine which shone with so vivid a light upon the writings of Augustine, but rather to found a society which might unfold itself, and receive

within its ranks those multitudinous hordes of barbarians who for many ages before its advent had been in motion towards the rally-point which had been marked out for them. We must learn if any and what influences were ready to subjugate, to instruct, and to organize them, or whether the great institutions of Catholicism insinuated themselves into the Church, as has been often stated, in a time of congenial barbarism, and as if by stealth, in the deep intellectual darkness under which humanity was labouring.

There are two institutions amongst those which were destined to act with energy on the Middle Age, which arrest us at once, as their incontestable preponderance detaches them from the rest—the Papacy and Monasticism; and it is our duty to seek out their origin, to consider the forces they respectively wielded at the moment when their exercise was called for, and to see whether their powers were exerted for the salvation or the corruption of the human race.

This is no place for renewing a worn-out controversy as to the origin of the Papacy, for the equity of modern criticism has reduced the passionate exaggerations of our predecessors, and no enlightened mind of our own day continues to regard it as a premeditated and wicked usurpation on the part of certain ambitious priests. A more impartial method points it out as an historical labour of the ages, the temporary consequence of a certain development which Christianity was destined to encounter. The religion of Christ, they say, took its rise in the conscience, in the inner solitude of man's personality, and so the Christian of the apostolic age was self-sufficient, was king and priest to his own consciousness. It was later that he felt the want of com-

bination, and with it the need of a common authority and a common rule; and thus towards the end of the first century the clergy was separated and distinguished from the mass of the faithful. It was not until the second century that the episcopal power was seen first to arise, then to dominate, so that in the third age the bishops of the different cities were naturally subordinated to the metropolitans of the provinces, and thus the authority of the bishops and the metropolitan archbishops was formed, by necessary consequence, upon the constitution of the Roman provinces. Lastly, when Europe, Asia, and Africa began, in the fourth century, to aspire to a separate existence, the capitals of these three quarters of the world became the three Patriarchal Sees—Antioch for Asia, Alexandria for Africa, and Rome for Europe; whilst in the two succeeding ages, when the barbarians had severed the West from the East, the Bishop of Rome, the acknowledged Patriarch of the West, became, without usurpation, tyranny, or outrage to humanity, the supreme chief of the Latin Church. Such was the theory in vogue at the opening of the present century—the view which claimed the most enlightened spirits of Protestantism as disciples, and formed the essence of the theology of its greatest modern writers; a thesis which aroused Planck and Neander, and was the corner-stone of the edifice of ecclesiastical history raised by the respected hands of Guizot; a view remarkable from its moderation, and which we must now examine more closely, to find the claim that it possesses to support a system of opinions which have been widely embraced and even become dominant.

In the first place, Christianity in no way admits of

this individualism which is thus laid down as the point of departure for the faith. For it is less a collection of doctrines than a society. It has charity as well as enlightenment for its special characteristic, and even the last-mentioned quality is not communicated to man solely by study and reading, but is the result of the spoken as well as the written word, as in a popular religion destined to make its earliest converts amongst the poor and those who could not read. Enlightenment as well as charity found its medium of communication in the contact of souls. For this reason St. Paul regarded the Faith as being the soul of a vast and single Body, of which Christ was the Head and His followers the members; and as the limbs cannot will except through their chief member, it followed that Christendom must be a living and consequently an organized body, and that from its beginning it must be manifested not as a group of scattered and solitary consciences, but as a true society, possessing a constitution with a chief over all, with obedience and control among its lower orders, and offering to the view all the necessary conditions of a complete organization. And this idea is evidenced by the earliest documents of Christianity, though we need enter into no minute discussion on the texts of the Acts of the Apostles to show how continual witness is borne therein to the action of the Apostolic College under the presidency of Peter, in conferring the episcopal character, in instituting priests and ordaining deacons, surrounded in the meanwhile by the Christian people, from whom it was not separate indeed, but still perfectly distinct.

Thus from this early period we find that priests existed, and not bishops alone. And this has been

often controverted, because as the bishop had of necessity passed through the priesthood, the name of priest was often given to him; but not a single passage can be quoted in which a simple priest, on the other hand, has received the title of bishop, whilst to avoid minute discussions, which only cause a loss of time and light, it is evident that St. Paul, in his epistles to Titus and Timothy, confers upon them the right of judging priests, whom the very fact of their yielding to this jurisdiction proves to have filled a subordinate position. And so from the beginning we have a hierarchy, not only existent, but in strong organization.

We might cite here as evidence for the end of the first century, and the beginning of the second, the epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch; but from their precise character the adversaries of the opinion we maintain have accused them of being apocryphal, as if unable to conceive the authenticity of documents so expressly condemning their position. So we must refrain from using this contested authority, and turn to others which have never been disputed. We come then to St. Irenæus, to Tertullian, and St. Cyprian, the most ancient of the writers who have treated of the ecclesiastical organization, who flourished at the end of the second century, and from their positions in the Eastern and Western divisions expressed the opinion of the Universal Church. These three great doctors agreed on all essential points, and amidst the strife of opposing doctrines, the din of heresies which were tearing Christendom asunder and snatching at the pages of Holy Writ, unanimously recognized the necessity of tradition in the interpretation of Scripture,

and the presence of that tradition in the corporation named the Church.* This corporation seemed to them to have been filled with a light which was universal, as the sun is one object, though it spreads its rays over the face of the earth, to borrow its strength from the Divine authority, to be the habitation of the Holy Spirit, which afforded it a perpetual vitality, "like a precious liquid which perfumes and preserves the vessel in which it is contained." But the Spirit could only be transmitted by the medium of the apostles, and the episcopate was but a continuation of the apostolate; so that in the time of St. Irenæus, at the end of the second century, each of the great churches maintained the succession of its bishops, but had never more than one at a time. Thus was the distinction between the episcopate and the rest of the priesthood established. But another and greater power was appearing contemporaneously, and as its bishop formed the bond of unity for the particular Church, so all these episcopal churches had need of a common centre. And therefore St. Cyprian, in his treatise "De Unitate Ecclesiâ," professed that the unity of the Church must be visible, and that therefore Christ had founded His Church upon the Apostle Peter, in order that its unity thus personified might be patent. Nor did Cyprian confine this primacy of Peter, or the unity which he represented, and whereby he gave strength to the Church, to the time of the Apostle's life, but prolonged and maintained it in the Petrine See, naming it, in a letter

* "Tradition reposes in the Church as one and universal, like a single sun, a single tree, a single fountain. Beyond the Church there are no Christians, no martyrs."

to Pope Cornelius, as the principal Church from whence the unity of the priesthood was derived.*

Language nearly identical was used by Tertullian; but it may be objected to these witnesses that they were Africans and Westerns—subject, therefore, to the indirect influence of Rome and of Latin ideas. Let us look, then, to counterbalance them, for evidence emanating from the Eastern Church. We shall find it in the person of St. Irenæus, who wrote earlier, at the end of the second century, and pointed to the episcopal succession as remounting without break to the Apostles themselves. For the sake of brevity, to save the task of enumerating that succession in every town, he paused before the Church of Rome, with which, he said, on account of its higher primacy, all churches, that is to say the faithful, throughout the world, ought to agree. These passages are incontestable, generally recognized and admitted even by Neander and Planck, reducing them to maintain that in the time of St. Cyprian, of Tertullian, and of Irenæus, the primitive spirit of the Gospel had been lost; that the doctrine of St. Paul was veiled by the Judaizing influence which was dominant, and aimed at organizing the Church after the fashion of the synagogue, with a spiritual chief corresponding to the high priest of the latter. So that we Christians have not only to reply to the objection as to why God waited four thousand years before sending His Son into the world, but to another which would ask why the whole order of the newly-granted revelation was disturbed at the end of the second century, and

* Et ad Petri cathedram atque ecclesiam principalem unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est." (St. Cypr. Ep. 55 ad Cornelium.)

its believers compelled painfully to grope amidst impenetrable darkness for the witness of those few years during which alone the true doctrine prevailed.

But these theories are wanting in foundation, and science itself demolishes them continually. For the Catacombs of Rome are pregnant with novel proofs of the ancient orthodoxy, and show us, with that rugged symbolism which characterized Christian art in the early centuries, Peter in every place teaching doctrine, and exercising the governing functions, and that not only in the short time that his life comprised, but as it were by anticipation in ages yet to come. We may allude especially to a crystal disk, lately found in the Catacombs, carved with the oft-repeated type of Moses striking the rock, from which the life-giving waters of doctrine flowed, whereat all the people might quench their thirst. But the figure as Moses was vested, not in the costume of the East, but in the traditional robes of the Popes, and bore the name *Petrus*— doubtless representing Peter, the guide, like Moses, of the people of God, who was drawing forth, by his episcopal staff, the waters which were to refresh believing humanity.

Thus, then, was the primitive constitution of the Church established: it possessed an authority founded by the intervention of the Almighty; its origin was divine, as was the consecration of its career; it was also visible, and the order descended from the Apostles to the bishops, from the bishops to their ministers. But yet there was scope for liberty in its organization. The Sovereign Pontiff could do no act without having previously consulted his brethren in the episcopate; the bishop referred to his brethren of the priesthood; and

the priest was of no authority at the altar without the concurrence of the entire Church—that is, of the whole body of the faithful, who supported him with their own prayers, and joined with him the intercession which he offered.

Before the close of the second century, in those remote times, the hierarchical constitution of the primitive Church contained, as it were, a sphere allotted to God, and another the privilege of the Christian people, principles of authority and of liberty, and all the essential elements of a newly-ordered society. When she was still menaced by persecution, and hunted down with remorseless perseverance, there was but little reason for her to leave traces of her passage, or of her institutions, which, much as they would have enlightened us in these days, would have then served but to betray her faithful children; but from that time forward, in spite of difficulty and peril still subsisting, the question we have been examining grows bright with an unmistakable clearness, and the Papacy is seen exercising its influence harmoniously with the process of time and the increase of danger.

Such, then, is the nature of the historical development, not of the principle, but in the exercise of that chief authority; and in proof that from the first it asserted itself with singular energy, we find Tertullian reproving a Pope, his contemporary, for having assumed the title of *Episcopus Episcoporum* and *Pontifex Maximus*. Strong expressions no doubt, which—or at least the gift of them—have seldom been claimed by Popes of modern days, for they have found a preferable title, and a more powerful guarantee, in being styled the servant of the servants of God. The considerable discussions which

arose later in the East, as well as the West, threw a light upon the subject which divested it of all ambiguity. The minds of the faithful were troubled by three great questions: the celebration of Easter, the administration of Baptism by heretics, and the case of Dionysius, the Alexandrian patriarch. As the Churches of Asia persisted in keeping the Paschal-time on the fourteenth day, which was the time chosen by the Jews, instead of on the first Sunday after the anniversary of the Resurrection, they fell under the interdict and excommunication of Pope St. Victor. Later, when the Africans, headed by St. Cyprian, decided that baptism given by heretics was invalid, and must be renewed, Rome maintained its validity if given with the appointed ceremonies, and, therefore, that it could not be repeated, and excommunicated the African Churches, who at once made their submission. And again, when Dionysius of Alexandria, in combating the heresy of Sabellius, let fall the expression that Christ was not the Son, but the work of God, the Bishop of Rome summoned him to explain. Dionysius accordingly did so, justified himself, and withdrew the statement. Thus in three important questions, which nearly touched dogma, the Papacy was seen intervening in the plenitude of a supreme authority. In the midst of the light of that brilliant fourth century, which beheld so many great occupants of the episcopal seat in the Eastern and the Western Church, we find the pontifical authority recognized and proclaimed in far stronger terms by St. Athanasius, the great patriarch of Alexandria, who declared that it was from the See of Peter that the bishops who preceded him had derived alike their orders and their doctrine, by St. Optatus of Milivium,

by St. Jerome, by St. Augustine—in a word by the Church's greatest minds. And the exercise of that power continued simultaneously, as when the Popes Julius I. and Damasus deposed or reinstated the patriarchs of Alexandria, of Constantinople, or of Antioch; when the legates of the Holy See took the chief place at Nicæa, and A.D. 347 at Sardica, where they declared that all episcopal sentences might be carried to the chief see of the Church of Rome; and when in the assembly of Ephesus the reunited bishops of the East, at the zealous instance of St. Cyril, who was supported by the authority of Pope Celestine, pronounced their decision in the case of Nestorius.

No one can doubt, therefore, that in the fourth century the Papacy was already in possession of its entire authority; nor can we see in this fact the work of the Christianized emperors of Rome, who desired to grant the half of their purple and of their dignity to the bishops of the imperial city. Hardly, in truth, had Constantine embraced the faith than he transferred the seat of his empire to Byzantium, and the interest of his successors lay in enhancing the power of the patriarchs of Constantinople, in elevating their authority over the Church, thus making them docile and obedient to themselves. For this they toiled, and in this they succeeded; but the emperors did not spend their cunning policy on behalf of the Roman pontiff—rather if they extended their care to him it would have been devoted to his humiliation. Nor was it any genius on the part of the Popes which raised their place so high, for not a single great man filled the

See of Rome during the first four centuries: they were but martyrs, perhaps wise as men, and capable as administrators—those obscure pontiffs who were destined to found so marvellous a power. Even Julius I. and Damasus were as nothing in comparison with the brilliant intellects which formed the boast of Asia and of Greece; for there was hardly a see in the East that had not been distinguished by some powerful mind. Alexandria had held Athanasius and Cyril; Antioch and Constantinople had seen their respective chairs filled by St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom: and as authority was seated in the West, genius certainly was the property of the East.

The first man of genius who appeared at Rome to don the insignia of the pontificate was St. Leo the Great, who was especially destined to contribute to the papal see no new principle of authority, but an example of the novel action which it would be called upon to exercise on the barbarous nations. On the 29th of September, A.D. 440, the clergy of Rome assembled upon the death of Sixtus III., and elected in his place Leo, then archdeacon of the Roman Church. The confidence placed in him by the late pontiff, and by the emperors, had made it a worthy choice; and at the very moment of his election the new Pope was in Gaul, occupied in reconciling Aëtius and Albinus, who had turned their swords against each other. Leo was already eminent for the zeal of his faith, and known as a champion against heretics, as a patron of Christian literature, and the friend of Prosper of Aquitaine and of Cassian. He was a man of learning and culture, and his eloquence had gained him the title of the

Christian Demosthenes. When called to assume the time-honoured authority of the Roman pontiffs, he showed prompt appreciation of the majesty of the office, and we still possess the discourse in which he rendered thanks to the people, and which he renewed year by year on the anniversary of his election. He expressed therein his gratitude to the clergy and people who had chosen him, modestly lamented the weight of the burden laid upon his soul, but turned confidently to God and the love of the Church, which would help him to sustain it, and above all trusted in the presence of Peter, who sat motionless and invisible behind his unworthy successors. Throughout he developed a doctrine which was the same as that of St. Cyprian, and without being bolder than the view of St. Athanasius, was more explicitly stated.

"The Saviour accords to St. Peter a share in His authority, and whatever He may will to grant in common with him to the other princes of the Church, it is through Peter that He communicates it, and everything which He does not refuse; but Peter did not give up the government of the Church with his life. As immortal minister of the priesthood he is the foundation of the whole Faith, and it is by him that the Church says daily, Thou art the Christ, Son of the living God, and who can doubt that his care extends to all the Churches?—for in the prince of the Apostles yet lives that love of God and of men, which neither fetters, nor prisons, nor the fury of the multitude, nor the menaces of tyrants can affright, and that dauntless faith which can perish neither in the conflict nor in the triumph. And he speaks in the acts, in the judgments, and in the prayers of his successor, in whom the episcopate

recognizes with one accord not the pastor of one city, but the primate of all the churches." *

Doctrine cannot be expressed in terms more formal, nor can ignorance go to a further excess than in the case of those who, not aware of the above statement, think it possible to date the rise of the papal primacy from Gregory the Great or even from Gregory VII.

St. Leo had reached the pontificate late in life, and under the most disastrous circumstances for the Church and the Empire; and Providence in no way lightened the difficulties of his mission. It was his task, moreover, to relieve Christianity from the heresies which were tearing it apart; for as if that form of probation was never to be complete, the efforts made by Arianism and Manichæism to wither its doctrine were reproduced under other forms in the middle of the fifth century. The conflict was then restricted to one point, the dogma of the Incarnation, and the person of Christ. Since the Council of Nice, it had been granted that His person was divine; but the issue now arose on the method of understanding that mystery. In order that His mission might be accomplished, it was necessary that He should be God-Man—man, for otherwise humanity could not expiate its offence in His person; God, that the mystery of redemption might be accomplished. But minds trembled at the depths of this mystery, and divided into two factions, one of which attacked the Divinity, the other cavilled at the Humanity. About A.D. 426, Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, declared in a sermon preached before the assembled people that it was heretical to call the

* "Non solum hujus sedis præsulem, sed ut omnium episcoporum noverunt esse primatem."

mother of Christ mother of God, as there were two distinct persons in Christ, one divine and one human; that it was a man in whom the Word resided, as God might abide in a temple, without more union than existed between the sanctuary and the Divinity which inhabited it. It was but a transformation of the doctrine of Arius, an attempt to deny the presence of God in Christ, and to sever what He had united by representing the person of the Saviour as that of a mere sage, a man of higher enlightenment, of more intimate connection with God than His fellows, but distinguished in no other respect from the rest of mankind; and the theory tended from its rationalistic character to a denial of the supernatural, and thence in unforeseen consequence to the destruction of the element of mystery in the faith and in time of religion itself.

But the Eastern Church also was aroused by the teachings of Nestorius: the council held at Ephesus in A.D. 431, at the pressing instance of Pope Celestine, condemned the heresiarch, and the contrary doctrine, that one person and two natures dwelt in Christ, was recognized and defined. A little later Eutyches, the archimandrite of a great monastery at Constantinople, pushing his zeal in the controversy against Nestorius to excess, maintained that in Christ there had been only one person and one nature, that the human had been absorbed in the divine nature, and therefore He had not possessed a body similar to ours, or flesh corresponding in substance to that of man, but that as God Himself and alone had laid aside impassibility, and suffered death upon the cross. By supposing a suffering and dying Divinity, Eutyches made a step towards Paganism, and confounded the attributes of the Deity

with those of humanity. This doctrine attracted the notice of Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, who deposed its author, whereupon Eutyches, looking to the spot which every Christian held to be the shrine of all wisdom and justice, appealed to Rome, and for greater surety referred the matter also to the Emperor, with whom the influence of Eudoxia and Chrysaphus was exerted in his behalf. Their interference procured his vindication at the robber-synod of Ephesus, held A.D. 449, which acquitted him on every point. But these intrigues failed to deceive the insight of Leo, who had fixed his attention upon those erring theologians, worthy forerunners of the men who maintained a mad dispute as to the nature of the light of Thabor at the moment in which the Turks were pouring through the breaches of the city of Constantine. The Pope had already intervened. With broad wisdom and true Roman good sense, he had written a letter fixing the truth of the contested proposition, and, dispersing with perseverance every obstacle opposed by intrigue, obtained the convocation of a great council at Chalcedon, A.D. 451. He did not select a spot remote from the Court, but a city of Asia, at the very gates of Constantinople, as he was without dread of any opposition which might be offered, and confident in the influence of his eloquence and talent. And, in fact, the letter written by him on the occasion is still considered as a worthy monument of ecclesiastical antiquity; it took its place at once in the cycle of dogma venerated by the Greek Church, and was translated into the languages of the East. We may give a fragment here to show the wise moderation with which Leo the Great kept to the true course.

"We could not conquer sin and death, had not He

who cannot be retained by death, nor touched by sin, taken our nature upon Him, and made it His own. He is God, as it is written, at the beginning was the Word. He is Man, as it is written, the Word was made Flesh."

This firm and luminous exposition of doctrine, which ran with so scrupulous an exactitude within the limits of the truth, so charmed and swayed the minds of the Orientals assembled at Chalcedon, that in the second session, having read the Creed of Nicæa, and the letters of Cyril and Leo, they exclaimed,—

"It is the faith of the Fathers; it is the faith of the Apostles. We all believe thus: anathema to those who do not. Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo. Leo has taught in accordance with truth and piety. It is the faith of all Catholics; we all think thus."

Thus was the great controversy decided, and Leo had made an act of faith in preserving to Christianity its character of a religion, and not suffering it to degenerate into Paganism, or a system of philosophy. He had made an act of faith in guarding its mysteries, lest it should degenerate into a theory in the hands of Nestorius, a myth with the treatment of Eutyches; for, as a theory, it would only appeal to reason, as a myth, charm the imagination; but, as a mystery, it engaged belief, for faith plunges into the unknown as a just man yields himself to the shades of death, knowing that in its darkness he will glide into a purer light, and find in dissolution another life. The strong mind of Leo, too, knew that in the obscure region of the faith he would receive the supernatural existence given as a grace from God to those who believe; for as the power

of persuasion is accorded as well to those who are strong in trust as to those who reason and dispute, so the confident assertion of that Roman priest silenced for a season the sophists of the East, and the Church retired into the long repose of thought, of reason, and of faith.

At the same time, St. Leo saved civilization in the West from the menaces of the barbarians. The era of invasion had arrived, and small were the resources of the Empire to offer resistance to the formidable hordes which swarmed on the steppes of Asia, and penetrated beyond the Rhine until the Gallic provinces, Spain, and Africa, fell under their dominion. Amidst the confusion, it was seen that the official resources of civilization had, indeed, dwindled away: the Emperor Valentinian III., a feeble and bad prince, remained at Ravenna, under the tutelage of his mother, Placidia. He was served by two eminent warriors, Aëtius and Boniface, but they were traitors capable of sacrificing their master to their mutual detestation. Aëtius was in constant communication with the Huns; Boniface had sold Africa to the Vandals: the former killed the latter with his own hand, and was in return poniarded by Valentinian himself, who again was destined to fall under the dagger of Petronius Maximus, whose wife he had dishonoured. Maximus succeeded to his throne and to his spouse, until the widow of Valentinian, on hearing of the crime committed by her new husband, called Genseric to her aid, and opened to him the gates of Rome. This was the signal for the death of Maximus, who was stoned in attempting to fly. He was succeeded by Avitus, Majorian, and Severus, whose short-lived reigns were lost at the approach of the day of doom

which was to sound, A.D. 476, for the Empire of the West.

The enemies of civilization, the double peril from which the world must be saved, were Attila, who, with his following of three hundred thousand strong, struck terror into Germany, Gaul, and the whole world, and Genseric, master of Africa and the South, who was feared even by the warriors of Attila. One day the latter sent a message to the two Cæsars of Ravenna and Byzantium, "Make ready your palaces, for I am resolved to visit you;" then, with his multitudinous hordes, he passed like a torrent over Gaul, lost the battle of Chalons, but neither hope nor fury, and, A.D. 452, crossed the Alps, and appeared before Aquileia. Carried by assault, after a short resistance, the town was given over to pillage and destruction, and Pavia and Milan soon shared its fate. The terrified emperor took refuge in Rome, but found therein neither generals nor legions; his only resource was the presence of a few counsellors, amongst the eloquent of the Senate, and the stronger influence which resided in the person of Leo. The Pope was deputed, in concert with Trygetius, ex-prefect of the city, and Avienus, a man of consular rank, to stop Attila, as swords and legions were lacking, by his eloquence, at the passage of the Mincio. The interview which followed has had no historians, for it did not accord with the nature or with the duty of Leo the Great to recount his own victory, nor with the taste of Trygetius and Avienus to avow their impotence. One thing is certain, that after an interview with Leo, Attila retreated across the Alps into Pannonia, where he died in the following year. Different legends were

woven around this fact: one especially related how that Attila had told his officers that their retreat was caused by the presence of another priest of severe mien, who stood behind Leo as he spoke, and signified that a further advance would be followed by his death. This tale, free from criticism, though apparently without authority, has traversed the ages as history, and received an eternal consecration from the hands of Raphael in the chambers of the Vatican. And when, in later times, another horde of barbarians, in the shape of the German Lutherans, entered Rome in the train of the Constable de Bourbon, and set fire to the *Stanze* of Raphael, in order to efface the triumphs of the papacy, flame and smoke alike respected the victory of Leo the Great.

Leo thus resisted the danger which proceeded from the North, but that from the South was still imminent. Genseric, half Christian, and half civilized, served by a hierarchy of functionaries formed after the method of the Empire, with a fleet under his orders which could annihilate distance and avenge the old disgrace of Hannibal, was more formidable than Attila. Summoned by the widow of Valentinian, he set sail, and in reply to the inquiry of his pilot, bade him direct the prow "Towards those whom the wrath of God was menacing"—a menace which, on that day, was hurled at Rome. Three years had elapsed since the retreat of Attila, and frequently had Leo reminded the Romans of their deliverance, had bade them attribute it not to the stars or to chance, but to the mercy of God and the prayers of the saints, and had adjured them to celebrate the anniversary in the Christian churches rather than in the circus or the amphitheatres. But his

words were in vain, and with the foolhardiness of mariners on the morrow of one tempest, and the eve of another, they had forgotten his warnings, till they learnt that Genseric had just landed at the head of a mighty army, was ascending the Tiber, and approaching the gates. Again did Leo go forth to the barbarians, and obtained that they should content themselves with mere plunder, but spare the lives and respect the persons of the inhabitants; whereupon Genseric entered the city, and remained there a fortnight, historians attesting that he pillaged the town, but refrained from shedding a drop of blood. And surely the second miracle was greater than the first, inasmuch as there was merit and skill, less in arresting the course of the barbarous Attila, struck mayhap by the majestic aspect of an aged Christian, than in restraining for fourteen days and nights that Vandal multitude, partly Arian, partly pagan, bound to the Roman population amongst whom they had fallen by no bond of identical belief, and in keeping them faithful to the letter of a treaty which had been signed on the eve of their entrance into a defenceless town.

It was the intense patriotism inspiring Leo which alone gave him such strength in the presence of the barbarians. This quality distinguished him amongst all the doctors of the West; it was the knot which bound together antiquity and modern times, perpetuating in the Christian mind the legitimate traditions of old. The Pope felt the passions of Cincinnatus and the Scipios within him, and though he took a different view of Roman greatness, was as devoted as they were to the glory of the city, in which he was citizen as well as bishop. He shows us this feeling in that sermon

for the festival of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in which he claims a providential destiny for the city in which he was established as servant of the servants of God.

"In order that Grace and Redemption might spread their effects throughout the world, the Divine Providence prepared the Roman Empire, which pushed to such a point its development, that in its bosom all the nations of the world were united, and seemed to touch one another. For it was part of the plan of the Divine economy that a great number of kingdoms should be confounded in one empire, that preaching, finding ways open to it, might speedily reach all the various nations whom one city held subject to her laws." *

This was akin to the doctrine which we have marked in the writings of Claudian, and shall find also in those of Prudentius and Rutilius—a view which will run on from age to age, and cause Dante to repeat that it was with regard to the Christian greatness of Rome that God established the Roman Empire. And thus the Roman idea did not vanish, but was revived, at the presence of barbarism, to resist and combat it; and Leo the Great commenced the glorious strife which Gregory the Great and his successors were to carry on until barbarism, purified, regenerate, victorious over its own nature, was definitely to yield in the person of Charlemagne, and to reconstruct the Empire of the West.

We have now sufficiently proved, that whatever power of the papacy there was, none of it was due to the period of barbarism; that it was constituted in the full light of the ancient order, under the jealous eye of Paganism, the discerning gaze of the Fathers of the

* St. Leonis Magni, Sermo primus in Natale Apost. Petri et Pauli.

Church, and raised in the centuries which were greatest in Christian theology; that it owed nothing to obscurity. It was endowed with its incontestable influence that it might resist the menaces of the barbarians, and begin a struggle, which lulled but for a moment under Charlemagne, to be waged again; for when Gregory VII. inflicted upon Henry IV. that penance which has gained him so much obloquy, he was but continuing the work of Leo against Attila, and saving civilization by driving the barbarian back to his proper domain.

But there was another power, namely, Monasticism, which took its part in the preservation of literature and civilization. We shall not have to rebut on its behalf the charge of novelty, which has been made against the papacy, for monasticism has been accused of too early rather than of too late an origin; of being born amongst the hoary religions of the East, of being penetrated with their spirit, and of being surreptitiously introduced into the Church to bring to her habits which were not her own, and, therefore, of having been less an aid than a peril, far less a glory than a scandal to the Faith. We have already said that Christianity did not create, but transformed humanity. Man already existed, but under the law of the flesh; the family, but under the law of the stronger; the city, but subject to the law of interest. Then Christianity reformed man by the revival of his spiritual constituent; the family, by protecting the right of the weak; the city, by arousing a public conscience. It found temples, sacrifices, and priests in the old society, and these, according to its maxim of regenerating everything, but abolishing nothing, it preserved and purified. It acted likewise as to monasticism, for every great religion has had

its monks; as India with her ascetics, who abandon everything, bury their existence in deserts, with no possession but a rag upon the shoulder, and a wooden platter in the hand, supporting life on grains or roots dug from the earth, and with huddled limbs spend day and night in contemplating the soul of God captive in their bodies, from which it is seeking release. Side by side with these Brahmin anchorites are the cœnobites of Buddhism, for in Tartary, China, and Japan there are no priests, but only monks, who live under the law of their respective communities. These Oriental institutions have but the spirit of the Paganism which inspires them; they are founded on a confusion of the principle of the creature and the Creator; and as the Brahmin supposes himself the lord of the universe, and that all men live by his permission, his contempt for his fellows is supreme; whilst the anchorite thinks that the supreme good is an absorption in the incomprehensible Buddha, so that pride and egoism are of the essence of the Indian asceticism. Monasticism appeared under purer forms amongst the Hebrews in the last days of the old order, for Judaism had its ascetics also in the Essenes and the Therapeutæ: the first, residing on the shores of the Dead Sea, were devoted to a life of activity; the second were placed at Alexandria, and gave themselves up to contemplation and prayer; while both classes practised celibacy and a community of goods, but rejected the use of slaves. The hard spirit of Judaism appeared in their hatred of foreigners, and their absolute separation from the remainder of mankind, whom they considered so impure, that the approach of a man who was not an Essene had to be followed by a purification;

whilst the sinner amongst them could hope for no reconciliation, his fault was irreparable, and the offering him the hand or breaking bread with him was forbidden. These orders survived the foundation of Christianity, and were known to Pliny the Elder, who instanced them as being a people distinguished from all others, "Living without women, abnegating all pleasure, leading an existence of poverty under the palm-trees . . . . thus, for thousands of centuries, remarkable fact, has this everlasting nation subsisted, and yet no child is born of its bosom, so profound is its hatred for other modes of life."*

It is in this quarter, and amongst the Therapeutæ especially, that we must look for the origin of Christian monasticism. Whilst imperilled society was still capable of regeneration, and martyrdom was the condition of the consolidation of the faith, the saints remained in the world to die in the circus or on the pile at the hour appointed by their God. As long as persecution lasted, the men were martyrs who would have been anchorites, and it was not till the moment which saw the dissolution of the Roman society that a new order was organized to replace it, and the bands were disciplined who, when Rome had fallen, were to assume her task and reconquer the universe. St. Paul, the first hermit, appeared A.D. 251. A little later he was followed by St. Anthony, who formed a Rule, and was succeeded by St. Pacomius, who assembled his disciples into regular communities, governed by a fixed law. Under this new rule they spread rapidly over the entire East, and at length St. Basil became the author of the ordinance which was soon vene-

* Plin. Maj. Hist. Nat. lib. v. cap. xv. (s. xvii.)

rated and adopted by all the Oriental monasteries. Suspicious of a solitary existence, he reduced the scattered ascetics to a life in community, and showed his preference for cœnobites rather than anchorites. "For," as he said to a hermit, "whose feet wilt thou wash, whom wilt thou serve, how canst thou be the last, if thou art alone?"

We must now mark the adoption by the West of that monastic life which already flourished in the Eastern Churches. We may probably see the precise period of the propagation in the Latin Church of the cœnobitic life, and assign to it a more remote date than that usually given at the foundation of Ligugé. For it was St. Athanasius, the friend and biographer of the hermit St. Anthony, who brought with him into the West the passion of imitating his life. In examining the journeys of Athanasius to the West more closely, we find that, exiled by Constantine, he came first to Trèves, A.D. 336, lived there for some time, and doubtless then found leisure for writing his life of Anthony, whilst he saw around him evidence of the superior merit of the cœnobitic life, for monasteries had early been founded at Trèves which retained the life of St. Anthony as their law and constitution. We have already spoken of the tale, related by St. Augustine, in his "Confessions," as making so deep an impression on his mind, of the two officers of the Court, who, whilst walking apart from their comrades in the suburbs of Trèves, came to a house tenanted by monks. Entering, they perceived a book upon the table: it was the "Life of St. Anthony." One of them began to read it, and at the tale of that pure life of the desert, spent in communion with God, and under a

cloudless sky, the poor officer, lacerated, doubtless, by the injustice of the Court, was profoundly touched, and, turning to his friend, remarked :—

" 'Whither does all our toil lead us? What end are we pursuing? What hope have we except that of becoming the friends of the Emperor? And what danger we are incurring! For it is our main duty to become the friends of God, and from to-day.' He began to read again, and his soul was transformed, and his mind despoiled itself of the world. He read, and the waves of his heart rolled tumultuously. He trembled a moment, judged, decided, and already subdued, said to his friend, 'It is over. I give up my prospects, and resolve to serve God here and at once.' His friend imitated his example, and when their comrades rejoined them, and had learnt their decision, they left them in tears, but weeping for themselves."*

This history shows the sudden power and irresistible fascination by which the enthusiasm for a solitary life was propagated in the heart of that dissipated, mournful, and worn-out society of the West, at the doors of which the barbarians were already demanding admittance. The companion of that officer followed his friend into the same monastery, and thus arose the cœnobitic life in the Western Church. We need not relate how St. Jerome formed and disciplined from his retreat at Bethlehem the colonies of monks who soon spread over the whole of Italy, nor how St. Augustine, charmed by the Pythagoræan idea of a life in common, which had been a part of the dreams with his friends at Milan in former days, founded monasteries when raised to the see of Hippo, and prescribed to them rules

* August. Confess. lib. viii. cap. vi.

which bore the impress of the wisdom and tact which characterized his genius. Gaul, however, was the peculiar land of the cœnobitic life; since St. Martin, who had been educated in a monastery at Milan, founded a similar institution at Ligugé, near Poitiers; and a little later the great house of Marmoutiers, near Tours, where he lived as bishop of the neighbouring town, with some eighty monks, and whence he was borne to his resting-place with an escort of more than two thousand. We see without surprise the foundation, in 410, of the great abbey of Lerins, which was to produce so many illustrious names; of another, also, by St. Victor, at Marseilles, which received from Cassian the traditions of the "Thebaid;" and again in the Island of Barba, near Lyons; whilst Vitrucius peopled with his religious the sandbanks of Flanders. So, from the opening of the fifth century, we see that the frontiers which the warriors of Rome had abandoned were guarded by colonies of different soldiery, by the cohorts of another Rome, who would stop the course of the barbarians, would fix them on the soil they had gained, and thus advance far towards the work of their civilization. We may state, in conclusion, the three points of difference between Monasticism and the Roman world, which gave it power over that old society, poverty in the midst of a world which was dying in its own opulence, chastity in a world which was expiring in orgies, obedience in a world that disorder was decomposing. But between Christian and Indian asceticism lay a deeper difference. Though the pagan hermits were chaste, poor, and submissive, they lacked the labour and prayer of their Christian followers. The ascetics of India spurned work and remained motion-

less, lest the occupation of their hands should trouble their contemplation, but the recluses of Christendom laboured either manually or mentally. The solitudes of the "Thebaid" had their smiths, carpenters, curriers, and even shipbuilders, whilst mental toil was dominant in the monasteries of the West. St. Augustine established it in the convents of Africa; it flourished at Ligugé, Lerins, and elsewhere; and literature found in the cloister its secret asylum. To labour perseveringly, not for self, nor even for wife or children, but for a community, was no light demand upon human nature, and the founders of the spiritual life had only called for this sacrifice and abnegation of leisure in the name of charity. They had never imagined that men could be united in a perpetual restraint, in a companionship which had mortification and forgetfulness of self as its essence, in the name of a pride which ambitioned ascendancy, or of a sensualism which craved for a gratification. To achieve this wonderful result a degree of self-denial was necessary: it was the work of the humility and charity which Christians laboured to attain through prayer. The sages of Paganism and the anchorites of India did not pray. Why should they do so, in their life of contemplation and absorption, having the Deity within them, or being gods themselves? But the motive to prayer with the recluse of Christianity was, that he recognized a principle which was greater and stronger than himself; his devotion was prompted by love, by aspirations to a better life, and to God Himself. He did not despise his fellowmen, but loved them with passionate effusion. Far from forgetting his aged father or weeping mother at the moment of his leaving them, or from becoming

generally dead to humanity, the Christian monk remembered his parents and his fellow-men by day and by night, in the moment of silent contemplation, or of loving communion with the Almighty, and his prayers were a method of doing service to mankind, and of co-operating in the work which aimed at purifying and sanctifying the Church.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIAN MANNERS.

It was our task to look for the available forces of the Christian society in the presence of that invasion whose mutterings were, so to speak, already perceived; to know what institutions were ready to receive the first onslaught of barbarism, to withstand it from the first, and finally to overcome it. Amongst these, two merited a nearer study, owing to the great destiny which following ages had in store for them. We have examined into the origin of the Papacy and of Monasticism, and found that the first arose out of the constitution of Christianity, and was the type of its visible unity; we have seen it increase in spite of danger, and as occasion called, until it exercised, in the person of Leo the Great, prerogatives as full as any that might be claimed by Gregory the Great or Gregory VII., and proved that the second was a phenomenon necessary to all great religions; and seen how, following the example of the prophetic colleges, the Essenes, and the Therapeutæ, the great monastic colonies arose which were to replace the faltering legions on the imperial frontier, and increase so rapidly as to stud the banks of every river; and how the writings of St. Jerome exhaled that aroma of the desert which was destined to attract countless anchorites towards a solitary life, and drive St. Columba into the mountains of the Vosges or the

forests of Switzerland. Thus the two institutions which have been represented as the work of the barbarians, the inevitable but irregular result of a period of trouble and of intellectual darkness, preceded the shadows which it was their mission to illumine.

It remains to examine the ecclesiastical legislation in its totality, in the cases especially of the new organization of the family by Christian marriage, of property by the laws relating to Church property, of justice by the procedure in the episcopal courts, and the penitential system of the Church, which embraced in some way all the degrees of human morality. But as time and space would be wanting for so vast an undertaking, we must confine ourselves to marking the origin of the Canon Law, that continuation in a purified form of the Roman traditions. And as the old temples remained standing, and Latin literature assisted to educate the generations of Christians who were thronging into the Church, so also was the ancient legislation most effectually preserved in the canonical institutions, which seemed at first sight to veil and smother it. We must study in the decrees of councils, or the mandates of the series of Popes who had followed the martyrs, all that survived of the traditional legislation of their persecutors, and how Ulpian, the great enemy of Christianity, was assured of living to posterity at the moment when the Church, by an amnesty, caused him to enter her fold, and occupy the highest place amongst her jurisconsults.

Thus the new institutions were full of power, but side by side with law was the prevailing state of manners. Society is seated less upon the large, solid, and perceptible bases called law, than on those other foun-

dations, hidden from the scope of science, which are called manners. Pagan Rome had mighty institutions also, but the progress of her legislation was the result of the decay of her morality. Did, then, the Christian society of the fifth century present the same contrast, or did progressive morality accompany the course of legislation? We may stop at two points of superiority in Christian manners, and dwell on the dignity of the man, and his respect for woman. The barbarians have been credited with the introduction of these two sentiments into modern civilization, and, in truth, those wandering heroes of the battle and the chase, who scorned to yield to any visible authority, and trusted in nothing but their bows and arrows, did bring to the new order of things—with that haughty humour which trampled under foot for long any legislative attempt to render them amenable to civil servitude—the feelings of independence, of honour, and of personal inviolability. And those savage men also recognized a certain divine quality in women; they sought oracles from them before the battle, came to them for the healing of their wounds when the conflict was past, and knelt before the soothsaying Velleda. Thus they were rich in a sentiment which was unknown to Roman society, which was to adorn the Middle Age and blossom into chivalry. Such, then, were the innovations of the barbarians upon the old world; but it remains to be seen whether they had not been forestalled—whether their contribution of these two generous instincts, which elevated the man, and surrounded the woman with veneration, had not been anticipated by a power which had already placed them in the category of virtues.

The chief, though deep-lying and secret, support of modern society, lies in the noble feeling termed honour, which is synonymous with the independence and inviolability of the human conscience, in its superiority to all tyranny and external force—in a word, the feeling of personal dignity which, be it understood, antiquity, with all its civic virtues, had suppressed. For, as we know, the citizen was nothing in the presence of the state; conscience was silent before law; the individual had no rights distinct from those of the Commonwealth. This was the general rule, and whilst under the old order the dignity of the man was crushed by the majesty of his country, humanity was debased in the three classes of slaves, the working men, and the poor, who formed its great majority.

We know what legislation had effected for the slave; but we hardly realize what was the practical lot of that human creature, or rather chattel, which was used either as a victim of infamous passions, or, as by Cleopatra, to try the effect of poisons, or, as by Asinius Pollio, as food for lampreys. Yet humanity had never quite lost its rights, and Seneca had dared to give utterance somewhere to the rash opinion that slaves might be men like himself. He had twenty thousand slaves of his own, and his stoicism did not issue in the emancipation of one. Moreover, his philosophy had passed into the writings of the Roman jurisconsults, and yet they laboured to diminish the number of manumissions as being detrimental to the public security. A moiety of the Roman population were held in a servitude withering alike to both mind and body. It was a received proverb that Jupiter deprived those whose liberty was forfeit of a half of their intelligence, and the slaves

believed themselves to have been fated to their eternal condemnation, under the weight of which they were crushed; and this resulted in the frenzied passion and gross profligacy to which they were abandoned, and which Latin comedy has so freely treated. Plautus himself had once turned the wheel as a slave, and we can therefore receive his evidence as to the deep corruption of the servile condition.

Christianity found matters thus, and has often been reproached with not immediately liberating the slaves; but it had two reasons for its course—in the first place, its horror for violence and bloodshed, and because the Christ who died upon the Cross had not pointed to the example of Spartacus—secondly, because the slave was not yet capable of liberty, until he had been made a man, with a reconstituted personality, restored self-respect, and a reawakened conscience. This was the work begun by Christ in taking the form of a servant and dying upon the Cross, and every one, after His example, in becoming a Christian, entered upon a voluntary servitude, *Qui liber vocatus est, servus est Christi.* Every martyr who died was truly and legally a slave *servi poenæ*, and so from the earliest time the fetters which had been reddened with the blood of Calvary, were purified and newly consecrated in that of the martyrs, and slaves came spontaneously to steep their irons therein, and disputed with their Christian masters the honour of dying for the inviolability of conscience. Amongst the martyred bands who braved death from the earliest days of the faith, the fallen and accursed section of humanity was amply represented. We have St. Blandina at Lyons, St. Felicita in Africa, and at Alex-

andria St. Potamiæna, who, when summoned by her judge to respond to the passions of her master, exclaimed, "God forbid that I should ever find a judge so wicked as to constrain me to yield to the lust of my master." From that time forward the conscience was reorganized, the person of man restored, and the slave had bent under a voluntary service. Henceforth the peril was rather that he should despise his master than himself; and we find St. Ignatius exhorting the slaves not to scorn their owners, nor to suffer themselves to be carried away by a pride in their purified yoke. A little later St. Chrysostom replied to those who inquired why Christianity had not enfranchised all slaves at a blow:—

"It is that you may learn the excellence of liberty. For as it was a greater work to preserve the three children whilst they remained in the furnace, so there is less greatness exhibited in the suppression of slavery than in showing forth liberty even in fetters." *

Thus did the enfranchisement of humanity commence, as has ever been the method of Christianity, by action upon the soul, in giving to the slave his moral liberty, and preparing the way for this long laborious struggle for civil freedom; for in proportion as the slave rose in his own, so also did he gain the esteem of his master. The dogma of the native equality of all souls appeared; slavery appeared rooted, not in nature, but in sin; and sin had been vanquished by Redemption. No Christian could believe that he possessed in his slave a being of an inferior nature, upon which he had every right, even to that of life and death; and St. Augustine declared that no Christian

* St. Johann. Chrysos. in ep. i. ad Cor. homil. 19.

master could own a slave by the same title as he owned a horse, and that, being man himself, he was bound to love his man as himself; and another doctor, commenting on the words which gave Noah dominion over the animals, insisted that in giving man the power of terrifying and coercing the beasts of the earth, God refused to grant it over his fellows. Slavery then subsisted amongst Christians, but as absolute power over the person was for ever abolished, it lost the half of its rigour, and the slave recovered a right in many things which were held sacred. He had rights in the family, to life, honour, and repose. The "Apostolical Constitution," an apocryphal work, but which certainly originated no later than the fifth century, decided that the slave might rest on Sunday in memory of the Redemption, and also on Saturday in memory of the Creation. The Church was skilful in finding pretexts for granting a respite to the poor people, in favour of whom Christ had said, "Come, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest." The master began, in sight of the Face which still glowed with the aureola of the crown of thorns, to recognize in the wretch whom once he had trampled under foot the image of his Lord. St. Paulinus, on thanking Sulpicius Severus for the gift of a young slave, took himself to task for having accepted the services of a young man in whom he detected a loftiness of soul.

"He has served me, and been my slave: woe to me who have permitted it, that he who has never been the slave of sin should serve a sinner. And I, unworthy that I am, have suffered a servant of righteousness to be my servant. Every day he washed my feet, and had I permitted it would have cleansed my sandals,

ardent to render every service to the body, that he might gain dominion over the soul. It is Jesus Christ Himself whom I venerate in the youth, for every faithful soul cometh from God, and every one who is humble of heart proceeds from the very heart of Christ."*

It is obvious that when respect for the individual was thus established, the very foundations of slavery were sapped; and in truth Christianity had but few blows to deal in order to level successively the walls of the half-ruined edifice. At first entire categories of slaves, as for instance those of the theatre, were suppressed. Before they were closed for ever, the gates of the pagan theatres had to open wide to give forth the crowds attached to their service, the numberless dancers and mimes, and the rest who laboured under the most shameful servitude — that of pleasure. Troops of gladiators also were enfranchised from slavery and slaughter, and although certain Christians still publicly paraded their following of slaves with insolence, it was at the cost of a determined opposition on the part of their faith; whilst St. John Chrysostom waited for them on the days of festival in the Basilica of Constantinople, and with scornful brow and outstretched hands demanded an account of their harshness, their prodigality, and their sloth. "Wherefore so many slaves? One master should be content with one servant. Nay, more, one servant should suffice for two or three masters; and if that seems a hard doctrine, think of those who have none." †

He finally granted two slaves to each, but he could not tolerate the rich men who used to walk in the

* St. Paulin. ep. xxiii. ad Severum.
† St. Johann. Chrysos. in ep. i. ad Cor. homil. 40.

public places and frequent the baths, driving men in herds before them like shepherds; and if it was objected to him that it was done in order to nourish a number of unfortunates who would die of hunger if they did not win their bread thus, would reply, "If you wish to act out of charity, you should teach them a trade and render them independent, and that is what you refuse to do. I know well," he added, "that my teaching is at your expense, but I am doing my duty and shall not cease to speak." His words had other results than the mere accomplishment of duty, and reconquered a right for oppressed humanity, so that every day beheld the manumissions multiplied which Constantine had authorized on the festival days of the Church; and the proper joyfulness seemed impossible if at the end of the service the hymn for the day was not shouted by a crowd of men as they shook off their fetters and cast them far away.

Thus the number of emancipations, once held so dangerous to the state, was ceaselessly enlarged. But now the Romans were bound to accustom themselves to enfranchise the captive barbarians if they wished to be liberated in their turn. For the barbarians had crept through all the chinks of the Empire, and were carrying away women and children in troops, and selling the senators themselves in the market-places. Christendom roused itself at this new phase of slavery, and threw its energy into the work of liberation, whilst the bishops, treated formerly as madmen when they spoke of the manumission of slaves, begged from the pulpit that subscriptions should be opened and collections made for the enfranchisement of the senators and patricians, who were now the captives of some Sueve or Vandal.

It was on such an occasion St. Ambrose uttered the admirable words in which he advocated the sale of the sacred vessels of the Church for the sake of these prisoners, "for," he said, "the redemption of captives is an ornament to the mysteries."

Such are the texts, and time would fail if more were cited, which must be given in reply to the questionings as to where and when Christianity first formally preached the release of slaves. We may also point to St. Cyprian, who found time during persecution, when tracked by the satellites of the proconsul, to collect money from the faithful, not for himself or his priests, but for some man who had been captured on the frontier by wandering Arabs; and later to St. Gregory the Great, freeing the slaves of his wide domains, and giving the following motive for his procedure:—

"Since our Redeemer, the author of the entire creation, willed to take the flesh of a man that the power of His Divinity might break the chain of our servitude, and restore our primitive liberty, it is a wholesome act to pity the men whom He made free, but whom the law of nations has reduced to slavery, and to render them, by the benefit of manumission, to the liberty for which they were born." *

These maxims were essential to the great labour of the Middle Age for the emancipation of classes, that transformation of slaves into serfs, of serfs into coloni, of coloni into proprietors, of proprietors into the middle class, of the latter into that third estate which was destined one day to dominate the modern nations. These principles animated the illustrious St. Eloi, when

* Decret. Grat. p. 11, caus. xii. quæst. 2; cf. M. Wallon, Histoire de l'Esclavage, tom. iii. p. 382.

escaping from the palace of the Merovingian Kings, whose servant and minister he was, he waited in the public place, impatient for the time of sale of the captives, then bought them and gave them immediate liberty in the Basilica, declaring them freemen at the feet of the Saviour. Later, Snaragdus, writing to King Louis le Débonnaire, made it a case of conscience that he should not suffer slaves to remain on his own domain, and should abolish slavery, by edict, from the land of every Christian. The efforts made for emancipation will be felt in the Christian society to the end; and when, in the thirteenth century, the land of France had no more slaves to set free, it was customary on great festivals to recall these solemn acts of enfranchisement by loosing crowds of caged pigeons in the churches, that captivity might be ended, and prisoners delivered still in honour of the Redeemer.

We must secondly consider what Christianity effected for the working men. Nothing can be more inimical to slavery than free labour, and so antiquity, as it supported the former, trampled upon the latter, and saluted it with the most opprobrious epithets. Even Cicero, that man of ability and common sense, to whom men of our own day so much love to recur, said somewhere that there could be nothing liberal in manual labour—that commerce, if transacted in a small way, should be considered sordid; if of vast and opulent character, could not be sufficiently blamed.* Brutus, however, lent money, but at such terrible usury that all Greece, in some manner, was his debtor. Atticus also lent at a high risk, and realized enormous profits. Seneca had successively involved his debtors in such cunningly

* De Officiis, lib. i. cap. 42.

calculated toils that Britain, unable to free herself, and stung by the exactions of the imperial proconsul, rose in a revolt which was nearly proving fatal, and cost the lives of eighty thousand Romans.

Under burdens of this nature free labour was crippled, and the result of this usury was the *nexi* and other penalties which menaced the insolvent debtor. For under the law of the Twelve Tables the man who failed to satisfy his creditor was given over into his hands to be sold as a slave, or might be cut into as many pieces as there were creditors, that each might claim his share. In the time of Seneca, although it was no longer customary to cut him into morsels, the insolvent was obliged to sell his children in public auction; and till the time of Constantine this mode of discharging debts was in force. But if free labour was thus treated by antiquity, Christianity rehabilitated it, following the example of Christ and His Apostles, especially St. Paul, who chose manual labour, and was a partner with the Jew Aquila, at Corinth, in the trade of tent-making, rather than eat bread which had not been won by the sweat of the brow. The early Christians were generally working men, and Celsus professed great pity for "those woolcarders, fullers, and shoemakers, a coarse and ignorant rabble, who kept silence before the aged and the heads of families, but secretly perverted women and children into a belief in their mysteries;" yet the Church was proud of that mob of her first children for whom he could not evince a sufficiently profound contempt, and even boasted of having taught some true philosophy to shoemakers, to cowherds, and labourers. Moreover, the labour which was elevated by faith and doctrine, was enhanced still

more by the sacred objects to which it was applied. Below the priests and deacons, but respected by all, was placed the order of diggers (*fossores*), so called from their work in providing beneath the quarries of puzzolane which old Rome had dug in the hidden recesses of the Catacombs, the retreats which sheltered the Christian community. They laboured with pickaxe and lantern, as pioneers of the new society, in clearing the way along which we are marching now, and were comprised in the ecclesiastical hierarchy as being the first order among the inferior clergy, "charged after the example of Tobias with the task of burying the dead, that their attention to things visible might lead their thoughts to those which are invisible;" and their condition is attested by numerous inscriptions and paintings which show us the *fossor*, with the instruments of his humble calling.* Christianity, therefore, regenerated labour by the force of example; and as it was not sufficient to honour toil, it reorganized it by adding an unselfish element, and teaching men to work in common one for another. This aim appeared in the monastic communities, and from the first St. Basil prescribed manual labour to his monks, and bade them, "if fasting made labour impossible, to live more generously, as being the soldiers of Christ." St. Augustine, too, replied in his work, "De Origine Monachorum," to those haughty monks who, once in the cloister, held themselves discharged from the burdens imposed upon the first man, and argued that Christ had bade them to act like the birds of the air, which toiled not, or the lilies of the field, which did not spin, and yet were not less gloriously

* Dion Cassius, lib. xii. 2; cf. Tacitus, Annales, xiii. 42.

clothed than Solomon himself,* by pointing out the dignity and majesty of manual work, how supremely excellent it was, in that it did not absorb the whole being, but left scope for meditation. "True that the birds do not sow nor reap," said he, "but as they do not possess your palaces, your granaries, your servants, why should you have them?" He added that if a multitude of slaves should come and demand admission to the monastery, its doors should be opened wide to them, for such hardy people assured prosperity to a Christian community, but that the men who entered upon the monastic life must not think that they were thus to escape their daily and accustomed toil, nor that peasants were to look for a life of delicacy and repose in the places in which senators buried themselves, that they might labour with their hands.

It was thus, then, that labour was organized in the early days of the Church. Roman antiquity had established industrial institutions; corporations (*collegia*), formed from the association of the working class; and Roman legislation bore plentiful witness to the existence of numbers of these societies for the use of workmen in wood, in marble, gold, iron, and wool. Their colleges appeared early to be in possession of common property with their *ordo*, their *curies* and especial magistrates, who were named *duumviri*, but they were feeble, crushed by the dominant legislation, oppressed by heavy imposts, and corroded by the corruptions of Paganism. Many of these institutions which have been so immoderately belauded were, in fact, only constituted for the purpose of mutual feasting and pleasure-seeking upon fixed days, so lofty was

* Matt. vi. 28, 29.

the essential idea of the corporations of labour in the times of heathenism. But Christianity undertook and succeeded in the task of regenerating them by an infusion of novel principles; and when the Empire succumbed the *collegia* and *scholæ* multiplied. War-like corporations rose speedily in Rome, in Ravenna, and all the cities of the Exarchate and the Pentapolis, broke the power of the Eastern emperors, saved the Papacy from the perils which menaced it at the commencement of the eighth century, and paved the way for those powerful commonwealths which were destined to so glorious a career. And the devotion which impelled their members to die in battle when the aggressions of Germany had to be resisted and the Guelph liberties, which were also the liberties of religion, had to be defended, was a true sign that Christianity was on their side, and a better idea than that of enjoyment was inspiring their deliberations; whilst in the passion of the Florentine and the other Italian corporations for the arts and for poetry, for all that is lovely and elevating, we may recognize at a later date the mark of the Christian and civilizing mission with which they were stamped—for it was by the hands of associated workmen that the Church of San Michele was reared at Florence, to be a noble monument of republican greatness.

In the third place, we must treat of poverty. Under the old order the poor had been trampled on consistently with the genius of an antiquity which regarded them as stricken with the reprobation of God, and even in the time of St. Ambrose Pagans and bad Christians were accustomed to say, "We care not to give to people whom God must have cursed, since He

has left them in sorrow and want." Poverty had first to be treated as honourable, and this was effected by giving to the poor the first place in the Church and in the Christian community; and St. John Chrysostom said of them: "As fountains flow near the place of prayer that the hands that are about to be raised to heaven may be washed, so were the poor placed by our fathers near to the door of the Church, that our hands might be consecrated by benevolence before they are raised to God." *

Thus the poor were not only respected but necessary to Christendom, and this explains the saying so often misunderstood and so often perverted: "There always will be poor men." No word has been said as to the perpetuity of the rich, but poverty must always exist in voluntary if not compulsory form, the reason of the institutions in which every member abnegates his own possessions, and vows himself to destitution; and so poverty has taken its proper rank in the divine economy, and become the mainspring of Christian society. Yet this was not enough, and want must also be succoured and consoled. Antiquity could boast of a system of public almsgiving, and could point to the corn laws of Cæsar, and the imperial largesses. Aurelian had had kindly feelings towards the people,† and desired that the distributions should be daily made to the poor of a loaf of bread of two pounds weight, of lard and of wine,

* St. Johann. Chrysos. De Verbis Apost.; habentes eundem spiritum, serm. iii. c. 2.

† Christianity first created *the people*. It had not existed at Athens or Rome, or rather there had been three distinct peoples, the citizens, foreigners, and slaves. The Church was the first to speak with accuracy in addressing her instructions *clero et populo*.

till the prætorian prefect had remarked to him, if he proceeded on thus, there could be no reason for not presenting them with chickens and geese. And the functionary was right; for the paupers of Rome fattened at the cost of their brethren of the provinces, and the Gauls, our ancestors, gave their blood and their sweat to nourish the starving rabble inscribed on the register of the census.

At Rome, almsgiving was not the duty of the individual but the right of all. But Christianity inverted the rule, and in its economy charity was not the right of any person, but the duty of the whole community. Benevolence became a sacred duty, a precept and not merely a counsel, and St. Ambrose addressed the wealthy amongst the faithful in these terms:—

"You say, I shall not give, but mark, if you do give alms to the poor, you give not what is your own, but his. You pay a debt instead of giving a voluntary largesse, and therefore the Scripture bids you to incline your soul towards the poor man and render to him his due." *

But if Christianity made almsgiving a duty towards the poor, it was towards that nameless and universal poverty which was in fact Christ Himself in the persons of the destitute. He was the sole Creditor and Judge of the tribunal to which the rich would be summoned who had abused their trust; and the Church conferred no personal right on the individual of reclaiming the share which might be rightly his. St. Augustine said:—"Surplus wealth is the competency of the poor, and the possession of what is superfluous is an usurpation of the rights of others. Give, then,

* Ecclesiastic. lib. iv. 8.

to your brother who is in need, and in giving to him give to Christ." The Almighty, then, as the sole master of everything, was the sole, the invisible, but long-suffering creditor of the rich man, who was but his steward; the judge as to the wants of his fellows; disposing of his wealth and ruling its distribution on his own responsibility. St. Ambrose desired that the wealthy should discriminate those who were able-bodied and could dispense with relief, as well as the rogues and vagabonds, and the men who pretended that they had been pillaged by thieves or ruined by creditors, whilst they made a scrupulous search for hidden misery, elicited complaints that had hitherto kept silence, visited the pallet of unrepining agony, and brought to light the hiding-places which had no echo for the voice of sorrow.*

Upon such conditions as these did the charities of the Church proceed; but besides what was done in private she possessed a public system of relief. We need not enter upon the organization of the various societies for almsgiving which were initiated by the collections made by the Thessalonians upon the ad-

* Here appears the misapprehended truth that in Christianity its morality is sustained by its mysteries. How did the new religion reconcile the duty of charity and the right of property, the precept of almsgiving and the right of refusing alms? Christ was present in man, and therefore the man who suffered must be loved for Christ, who would vindicate the rights of the poor in another world. Christian morality exists side by side with its dogma. If the latter is subtracted, the former falls entirely, or its fragments help to construct a morality of egoism, of tyranny, of disorder, and of immorality. The abiding presence of Christ in humanity is witnessed to by St. Martin and the beggar, St. Elizabeth and the leper, and thence their miseries were alleviated with a feeling of passionate transport rather than disgust, for they were the sufferings of the Saviour.

vice of St. Paul, on the first day of every week. The writings of St. Justin show us that the faithful never separated on the Sunday till a collection had been made for the poor, and we have it on the authority of St. Cyprian and others, down to the time of St. Leo, that these subscriptions were of regular continuance until the establishment of the Roman diaconates. Thereupon a vast system of public benevolence arose, as each one of these deacons was bound to visit two quarters of the great city and to inscribe the names of the poor therein upon a register, mentioning their claims to relief and taking all the precautions of a regular administration. We may give as one example that beautiful story which tells how St. Laurence, when charged to surrender the treasures of the Church to the prefect of the city, promised to do so within three days, and how when the time had elapsed the functionary came to the appointed spot and found ranged under the colonnades a multitude of maimed and miserable paupers, whom Laurence presented to him as forming the wealth and the sacred vessels of the Roman Church.

Moreover, Christianity instituted communities of benevolence, as, for instance, the hospitals which arose everywhere as open asylums for the miseries and infirmities of humanity. These establishments were mentioned as of long foundation in one of the laws of Justinian, and the same idea is expressed in a canon which finds its place ordinarily at the end of those passed at the Council of Nicæa, and shows us the condition of legislation and manners in the East from the earliest days of Christianity:—

"Let houses be selected in every town to serve as retreats for strangers, for the poor and for the sick. If

the goods of the Church suffice not for this expenditure, let the bishop cause alms to be continually collected through the agency of the deacons, and let the faithful give according to their ability. And thus let him provide for the poor, the sick, and the stranger among our brethren, for he is their mandatary and their steward. That work obtains the remission of many sins, and of all others is the one which brings man nearest to God."*

Hospitals, accordingly, were opened from one end to the other of the Roman Empire, and as they multiplied in the East, the West was not wanting in the work. Two illustrious personages—a Roman lady named Fabiola, a descendant of the Fabii, and Psammachius, the scion of a senatorial family—devoted themselves to God, sold their goods and raised, the one a hospital for the sick at Rome, the other an asylum for the poor at Ostia. On the death of his wife, Psammachius honoured her memory by charity instead of strewing flowers upon her tomb, and St. Jerome, writing from the wilderness in praise of his good works, does not say that they are sufficient:—"I learn that you have founded at the port of Ostia an asylum for destitute travellers, that you have planted a shoot from the tree of Abraham on the coast of Italy, and have raised another Bethlehem, a house of bread, on the spot where Æneas traced his camp. Who would have believed that the great grandson of so many consuls, bred in the senatorial purple, would have dared to appear clothed in the black tunic without reddening at the glance of those who were his equals? Yet although you, the first amongst patricians, have become a monk for the sake of the poor, find

* Concil. Nicæn. can. 70.

therein no subject for pride. Well may you humble yourself, for you will never be more lowly than Christ. I desire that you walk barefoot, make yourself equal with the poor, knock modestly at the door of the indigent, become an eye for the blind, a hand for the maimed, a foot for the lame, a carrier of water, a cleaver of wood, a lighter of fires; all this I wish for you; but then—where are the buffetings and spittings, where the scourge, where the cross, where the death?" He lighted upon the secret of Christian benevolence, for it was the memory of its first poor Man, dying upon the cross, which was to impassion those servants of the destitute who were to carry to such a pitch during the Middle Age their enthusiasm for poverty. St. Francis of Assisi was to afford a fresh example, and his devotion, capable of inspiring the poetry of Jacopone da Todi, was to inspire Giotto also to represent in his matchless fresco the marriage of the Saint with Poverty. Neither had the barbarians recognized this sentiment any more than the love of work or pity for the slave. It was true that they felt keenly on the dignity of man, but it was of man when free, and lord of money and the sword. They placed the slave in a happier position than any he had known under the Roman law, but he was still dependent on the caprice of a master who could forfeit the life of a useless servant. And as for poverty, they thought their Valhalla could only open to those whose hands were filled with gold, whilst they scorned labour no less as involving subjection and self-conquest —for the barbarian could conquer everything except himself. Barbarism, indeed, failed to regenerate the states of slavery, poverty, and labour, which antiquity had blighted and dishonoured, and even Christianity

only effected little by little, at the cost of many a long struggle, the restoration of their proper dignity to those three types of humanity which had been so long insulted, disowned by the injustice of the old civilization, and trampled in the dust by the scorn of the barbarians. Long ages passed ere some few hospitals were reared in the regions of barbarism. At Lyons, in the sixth century, that great Hôtel Dieu was opened which has never since been closed, and the seventh age beheld the commencement of the hospitals of Clermont, of Autun, and of Paris. Speedily they were multiplied everywhere with a grand prodigality, till the time came when every Christian township had, beside its church, an asylum open to misfortune. St. Gregory of Nazianzum, in relating the foundation of the great hospital at Cæsaræa, raised by St. Basil, exclaimed that he was witness to marvels surpassing those of antiquity, excelling the walls of Thebes or Babylon with its hanging gardens, the Monument of Mausolus or the Pyramids of Egypt, those magnificent tombs which could not give life back to one of their regal occupants, and reflected but a gleam of empty glory upon their founders. And he was right, for the old time had excelled us in raising monuments for pleasure, and when we look at our cities of dirt and squalor, with their houses crowded one against another, and the hard and joyless existence meted out to those who are imprisoned within their walls, we may well think that could the ancients return they would think us simply barbarous; and did we show them our theatres, those small and smoky rooms in which we are pressed together, they would retire in contempt and disgust. For they understood the art of enjoyment far better than we do; no sum was too great

if spent in rearing their coliseums, those theatres and circuses in which an audience of eighty thousand came and sat with ease; but we can crush them with the monuments we have raised to sorrow and to weakness, by pointing to the numberless hospitals that our fathers consecrated to suffering. Yes, the ancients could methodize pleasure, but ours is a different science: they, too, knew how to die—but let us avow it, the pangs of death are short, we have the secret of true human dignity, our service is long—as long as life itself —and it consists in suffering and in toil.

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMEN OF CHRISTENDOM.

We have been seeking to know to what degree the Christian society was prepared to receive the barbarians and subject them to its institutions and its customs; how far, also, it excelled them in surpassing the generous instincts that those youthful races had preserved, far away from Roman corruption, under the favouring shade of their forests and their icy sky; and we paused to contemplate the two feelings, as to the dignity of man and the respect due to woman, with the introduction of which the savage tribes have been credited, and which form the essence of modern manners. But we perceived that if the barbarians preserved these sentiments as instincts, Christianity had raised them to the category of virtues. The former had recognized a dignity proper to man, but to the man who was free and armed, who scorned both obedience and labour; they owned, in fact, that chivalrous sentiment of honour which was destined to replace the old military discipline of the Roman legions. But they knew nothing, for the Gospel alone could read them the lesson, of the dignity of that great majority of the human race which was bound by servitude, by labour, and by poverty, to obey, to work, and to suffer. In woman also they

recognized, side by side with the qualities of weakness, an element of divinity. The power of delicately swaying the strong is the chief weapon of the weak, and the gauntlet of iron does not pluck a flower as it crushes a sword; so the barbarians beheld in their females the necessary companions of their adventures and of their perils, and could boast of warriors, virgins, and prophetesses amongst them. But their renown was dissipated when the danger that produced it had past; and, on the other hand, classic antiquity was absolutely ignorant of the delicate influence of female tact.

As for the East, the laws of Manou contain exquisite passages on the destiny of woman; but side by side with these they tell us that "women have long hair, but narrow minds;" and the Greeks pronounce that as the gods had given strength to the lion, wings to the bird, and reasoning faculties to man, having nothing left for woman, they gave her beauty. As famous amongst their women they can only cite the courtesans Phryne and Aspasia, and the highest eulogium the Roman passed on the female sex was in praise of their fecundity. Such was the term allotted to female virtue and greatness by the sole nation of antiquity which honoured them at all. Yet we must remember that Rome did admire Lucretia, Veturia, and Cornelia, for she recognized the merit of domestic virtues and family traditions.

Let us confess, in justice to Roman law, that it gave a sublime definition of marriage. It is, it said, the union of male and female on the condition of a common life and a complete sharing in all rights, divine and human—*Nuptiæ sunt conjunctio maris et feminæ et consortium omnis vitæ, divini et humani juris com-*

municatio.* A law which was grandly expressed, but was daily belied, not only by the prevailing manners, but by other enactments, till, instead of the professed equality, a Roman marriage presented an aspect of extreme inequality. And, firstly, an inequality in respect to its duties; for although there were modesty and virtue of old, and Rome, in fencing them about with oaths, the Divine Majesty, and the terrible image of the domestic tribunal, had spared nothing to place these qualities out of danger, yet she had neglected male chastity, the surest guardian of the modesty of woman. She had divided its duties unequally, and though she required of the wife virginity before, fidelity and constant purity during, marriage, these were mere virtues of the gynæceum, which the husband need not recognize. And society undertook to give to women different and most dangerous lessons in admitting them to the ceremonies of the pagan worship, and the mysteries of the Bona Dea. Marriage also brought about a difference in social condition. The best position afforded by the Roman law to the wife on the day whereupon the pair were united by the ceremonies of the confarreation, under the auspices and with the consent of all the gods, was that of being treated as the daughter of her husband, and of having a child's portion on the day on which his property was divided. This was the utmost the majesty of man could afford to concede to woman—to treat her as a child, and indulge her with infantile pleasures, with playthings, and the luxurious living which was fitted to charm an uncultured imagination; and thence proceeded the complaints of philosophers as to the insolent luxury of the

* Digest. xxiii. tit. ii. lib. i.

Roman ladies, as to those feeble creatures whose foot could not touch the ground, who could only move a step unless carried in the arms of eunuchs, and dangled from their ears the value of many an estate: all this because the woman was principally but a mere instrument of pleasure.

But she was also a means of perpetuating the family. A Roman of position always married for the sake of getting children, *liberorum quærendorum causâ*, and law itself favoured paternity and maternity by giving privileges to those who had given three children to the State, *jus trium liberorum*. But it was only on the two conditions of pleasing her husband and propagating his race that the wife held her place at the domestic hearth, for if she became old and barren, or wrinkles appeared on her forehead, the gates of the conjugal domicile instantly opened, and the freedman came to bid her go forth: *College sarcinulas, dicet libertus, et exi.**

So unequal an union could hardly be lasting, and divorce was introduced into the Roman legislation, and practised under every form and upon every motive. There was the favourite divorce of men of position, on account of weariness, practised by those who changed their wives yearly. Another kind proceeded from calculation, as proved by Cicero, who repudiated Terentia, not because she had caused trouble to his soul, but because a new dowry was a necessity for the satisfaction of his creditors; and, lastly, divorce might have generosity for its motive, as in the case of Cato, who, when he found that his wife Marcia had taken the fancy of Hortensius, transferred her to

* Juv. Sat. vi. 147.

him, under the title of spouse. But if this was the position conferred upon wives at their marriage, woman found her revenge in the iniquity of the law itself, and made, in her turn, divorce her weapon to serve her interests and her calculations. This occasioned the notorious immodesty of the Roman matrons, who, in the time of Seneca, reckoned their years by the number of their husbands, instead of the number of consuls.* They also suffered divorce in order to remarry, and married with a view to divorce; and St. Jerome related how he had been present at the funeral of a woman who had possessed seventeen husbands. Women found the equality in vice which their husbands refused them in virtue, and were to be seen, like men, seated at orgies, passing whole nights in glutting themselves with wine; like them, vomiting that they might feast anew, and multiplying their adulteries, till continence was but a synonym for ugliness.† They had a place of honour in the amphitheatre, and gave the signal for the butchery of the last gladiator as he fell wallowing at their feet, and imploring their mercy. When, at last, the passion for the fights of the circus had taken possession of the whole Roman people, women followed the knights and senators as they descended into the arena, and the populace had the pleasure of gazing at combats between nude matrons. And thus Seneca could say with force—for the horrors of the time and the degradation of human nature favoured the illusion—"Woman is but a shameless animal, and unless she is given plenty of education and much learning, I can see in her nothing but a savage creature, incapable of

* Seneca, De Beneficiis, lib. iii. 16.
† Ibid. ep. xcvii.

restraining its passions."* Yet this proud philosopher was ungrateful, for he was the spouse of that Paulina who desired to share her husband's fate, and caused her veins to be opened with his.

Such was the history of marriage with the wisest, most upright, and most practical nation of antiquity. It was from this degraded state that Christianity had to raise the sex, and at first sight it seems as if the memory of original sin, as due to the first woman, would have added to its bitterness. But St. Ambrose did not thus regard it, and applied all his genius to the task of proving that, in the Fall, woman was more excusable than man, for the latter had suffered himself to be led away by his sister, and his equal, whereas the former was deceived by a fallen angel, a being superior to mankind; that her repentance also had been more prompt, and her excuse more generous, in merely laying the blame upon the serpent, whereas man had replied to God, "It was the woman that thou gavest me!" And what, again, were memories such as these, compared with those thoughts which surrounded the work of Redemption; for if woman had been the cause of the first offence, had she not made due reparation in giving birth to the Redeemer?—and, as the saint continued with eloquence, "Approach then, O Eve, henceforth to be called Mary, thou who hast given us an example of virginity, who hast given us a God, a God who has thus visited but one, but who calls all to Himself."†

It was theology, then, which rehabilitated woman for Christianity, and the worship of the Virgin, speedily

* Seneca, De Constantia Sapientis, c. xiv.
† St. Ambros. De Institutione Virginis, c. v.

introduced, wrought the same effect in practical manners as in dogma. That this worship commenced in the Catacombs has been established by discoveries made up to the present day; and the Virgin and Child figure in frescoes, of which, from the nature of the cement on which they are painted, the third century must be given as the latest date. Thus did the radiant image which was calculated to gild with its rays the weaknesses of women, illumine the shades of that primitive and subterranean Christendom, and emerged thence surrounded by a galaxy of those virgins and martyrs to whom places were assigned on the altars of the Church. It was supremely necessary that faith in female virtue should be restored, and this Christianity effected by founding the public profession of virginity, and giving the veil and golden chaplet to those maidens who remained in the bosom of their respective families, but honoured by an open adhesion the virtue to which antiquity had refused belief. It was needful, also, that women should rival men in the stern qualities which had been thought their monopoly, in the courage that courted martyrdom, and the honour of dying frequently the last of all. Such was the example given in the earliest days by Thecla and Perpetua, and it is supremely touching to note the respect with which the martyrs in their prisons environed these nursing mothers of Christendom, our mothers in the faith, who showed them the way to glory, as angels from heaven, wingless indeed, but excelling the angels by their tears. The early ages of the Church afford many a like spectacle, but nothing chronicled in the acts of martyrs excels in beauty the reverence showed to St. Perpetua by her brethren in suffering up to the

moment when she fell beneath the hand of the gladiator, in the presence of the Roman people yelling with delight.

But we must refrain from too near an approach to the sanctuary, and rather than treat of women in their privileged and exceptional positions as deaconess, virgin, or widow, let us consider the place assigned by Christianity to daughters of Eve, whom it had redeemed from their ancient curse, in the ordinary walks of life. It was incumbent upon the Church, in order to regain for woman her proper place in the family, to remould from head to foot the institution of marriage, and add to it all that Paganism had rejected. Under the Christian order the propagation of children was no longer the principal end of marriage, and St. Augustine says beautifully—and it is also the teaching of Tertullian—that its chief object is to set forth the example, type, and primitive consecration of human society in that love which is its bond. And as that type of all society must needs be a perfect unity, an unity consequently in which every part is equal and indissoluble, therefore it follows that in Christian matrimony everything is equally divided but nothing broken; the condition and duties of life are equally shared by the two contracting parties; each is bound to bring the same hope, a heart in due subservience to the ties which are to unite them for ever, as St. Jerome says, with his rough and energetic language—"The laws of Cæsar are one thing, the precept of Christ another; one thing the decisions of Papinian, another the commands of Paul. The pagans give free scope to the impurity of men, and content themselves with forbidding them to commit adultery with married women,

or to violate freeborn maidens; but they allow them their slaves and the lupanar. But with us what is forbidden to women is not permitted to men, and under a common duty there must be equal obedience."*

Such teaching made Christianity burdensome to the pagan world as well as to the Jews and the barbarians; and may we not add that it renders it distasteful to men of our own day? It was the magnificent equity manifested in the voluntary humiliation of the mighty, the spectacle of strength and weakness subjected to a common yoke, which caused the world to shrink from submitting to the faith. This appears even in the Gospels, when the Apostles replied to Christ when He used such language, "If it be thus it were better never to marry;" and therefore the Fathers, from the first days of the Church, laboured in instilling these stern maxims into the rebellious hearts even of Christians, and acted, so to speak, the office of police in those Christian families into which concubinage was ever stealthily creeping to banish the wife whom they desired to install as queen over the domestic hearth, unsatisfied till they were assured that henceforth the house would recognize but one ruler, and that no stranger would usurp the place marked out by God for the wife. And as Christian morality was labouring to establish an equality in duty between each married couple, it was also necessary to maintain an equality in their conditions; for woman, destined formerly to serve the pleasures, to please the senses, and to multiply the posterity of her husband, was to be entrusted henceforth with a graver task. So the Church did not shrink from raising her dignity by an austere method,

* St. Hieronymus, ad Oceanum de Morte Fabiolæ, ep. xxvii.

by despoiling her of all superfluous ornament, and stripping off the wretched finery which was of no use in winning the heart of her husband. Tertullian wrote whole books against the attire of women, reproached them with being loaded with jewels, and expressed fear lest on the day of martyrdom the neck which was covered with emeralds should leave no room for the axe of the executioner. The early time of Christianity was no golden time, but rather an age of iron, and therefore the Church assigned such lofty duties to its daughters, and entrusted them with the majestic ministrations of charity. In his writings to his wife, Tertullian shows us the Christian woman fasting, praying with her husband, rising by night to attend the religious assemblies, visiting the poorer brethren in their hovels, haunting the prisons, and throwing herself at the gaoler's feet to obtain the privilege of kissing the martyr's chain. It was through these severe exercises, these austerities and perils, that the dignity of the wife was tempered, that she shared with her husband the honours of life.*

But this was not all, and when unity in duty and condition had been established, it was necessary to make it lasting. The Roman law admitted of divorce without limit, and subject to no condition, by the simple consent of the parties; and so great was the strength of the prevailing habit, the influence of the manners in vogue, that the Christianized emperors dared not touch the law of divorce, or rather did so with cautious timidity, and then quickly withdrew the reforming hand. An institution, enacted by Constantine in the year 331, restricted it to three cases between the

* Tertullian, ad Uxorem, c. ix.

husband and wife, but transgression was only punishable by fine. Yet even this legislation seemed too rigorous, for Honorius, in 421, narrowed certain of these provisions, whilst Theodosius the Younger went so far as to restore divorce by mutual consent, in which aspect it passed into the legislation of Justinian, who did not dare to efface it entirely from his codes. But the Christian doctrine could not relax its inflexibility, although the wisdom of the emperors hesitated: it was the occasion then or never to declare that Christianity had its laws as well as Cæsar, and St. Chrysostom exclaimed, "Do not cite to me the laws which ordain you to notify your repudiation; for God will not judge you according to the laws of men, but according to His own."

In the year 416, the Council of Milevium forbade parties who had been divorced to contract other marriages, and thus for ever changed divorce into a simple separation of body. This expressed the entire Christian theory as to marriage, the doctrine which has ever since subsisted, and has resisted all the opposition afforded it by the advancing centuries.

Marriage includes something more than a contract, for it involves a sacrifice, or rather a double sacrifice. The woman sacrifices an irreparable gift, which was the gift of God, and has called forth the solicitude of her mother, her first beauty, frequently her health, and that faculty of loving which women have but once; whilst the man in his turn surrenders the liberty of his youth, those incomparable years which can never return, the power of devoting himself for the being whom he loves, that is only found at the opening of life, and the love-inspired effort for the creation of a glorious and happy future. All this man can effect but once between the

age of twenty and thirty years—a little earlier or a little later—perhaps never; and therefore Christian marriage is a double oblation, offered in two chalices, one containing virtue, modesty, and innocence, the other a pure love, devotion, the eternal consecration of a manhood to a feebler being, whom yesterday he knew not, and with whom to-day he thinks himself happy to pass his existence: and the cups must be equally full, that the union may be a holy alliance and blessed of Heaven.

It was only by thus making over to woman an absolute dominion over the heart of man, and giving her an undivided rule in domestic matters, that Christianity could consent to open to her the gates of the house, permit her to cross the limits of that gynæceum to which the ancients had delegated her, and advance into the city now disposed to reach her with respectful veneration. For, when during the space of three centuries mankind, Christian and pagan, had become accustomed to seeing women standing as martyrs before the prætorium, as virgins in the churches, speeding in every direction to visit the poor, and hunting out misery for relief, they suffered them to pass free from injury and insult, as heavenly messengers who went through the world only to do good; and there was thus no longer any danger for them in the streets of those tumultuous towns along which formerly the matrons of Rome used to be carried in their litters, borne in the vigorous arms of German or of Gallic slaves, who protected them from insult. Respect was now assured them, and they availed themselves of it to exercise that magistracy over charity which they have preserved to our own day; and not the deaconesses alone, but simple Christian women, devoted their lives, or the part which was left free from

the exigencies of family duties, to the service of the poor and suffering, who had never yet had their tears wiped away by hands so tender and benevolent.

St. Jerome relates how Fabiola, the descendant of the Fabii, who in her ignorance of the principles of Christianity had unhappily availed herself of the right of divorce, when touched by the death of her second husband, resolved to do public penance, and presented herself one day at the Lateran basilica with ashes upon her head, in the ranks of the avowed sinners, imploring, amidst the tears of the people, the clergy, and the bishop himself, that she might be permitted to expiate her fault; and how, upon receiving absolution, she sold all her goods and raised out of the proceeds a hospital for the poor, which she served in person. The daughter of consuls and dictators dressed the wounds of the maimed and miserable, of slaves whom their owners had discarded, carried the epileptic sufferers upon her own shoulders, staunched the blood of sores, and in fine, as St. Jerome said, performed all the services which wealthy and charitable Christians, who were ready to give alms of their money, but not to sacrifice their repugnances, were accustomed to transact by the hands of their slaves. But a stronger faith conquered all natural disgust, and therefore popular veneration attached itself to the woman who had so scorned and trampled upon her hereditary grandeur, that she might become the serving-maid of misfortune; and when Fabiola died, St. Jerome related her triumphant obsequies as forming a worthy parallel to the ovations which old Rome had lavished on her great ones. "No," said he, "Camillus did not triumph so gloriously over the Gauls, or Scipio over Numantia, or

Pompey over the nations of Pontus. They have told me of the crowd which preceded the procession, and the torrents of the people who came to swell it. Neither the squares, nor the porticoes, nor the terraces of the houses sufficed to contain the multitude. Rome saw all her diverse constituent races reunited into one body, and crowds of enemies found themselves in agreement for the glory of a penitent." * We see the female sex already in possession of that tender empire of charity which they have never suffered since to escape from their hands. And a few years ago the spectacle offered by an entire people accompanying the funeral procession of Fabiola, was again to be witnessed, when the same populace hurried to the obsequies of the young Princess Borghese, and the horses of the bier were unharnessed by the crowd, which insisted on carrying the corpse of its benefactress to its last resting-place. This was a point upon which the manners of our day touch the usages of antiquity. Scarcely, in spite of the ages which divide them, can we discover the least distance between them, for all the differences of time vanish as they enter the bosom of the Church, the domain of eternity. Armed with the influences of benevolence, women soon acquired a power over the tone of manners, an empire more puissant than that of law. Soon they had their share in swaying legislation itself, as appeared in the fifth century in the case of Pulcheria, the daughter of Arcadius, who being a little older than her young brother Theodosius II., felt forcibly the difficulty of the epoch in which he was called to reign. Therefore, devoting her youth and her virginity to God, she undertook the guardianship of her

* St. Hieronymus, ep. lxxvii. de Morte Fabiolæ.

brother, and thus afforded the spectacle of a girlish princess of sixteen years, grand-daughter certainly, and sole inheritress of the genius and courage of Theodosius, governing the Empires of the East and West, which had no opposition to offer to her influence and her talent, and struggling during a whole reign against the intrigues of a court of eunuchs, and, notably, against that eunuch Chrysaphus, who seemed to be raised up as the evil genius of the Byzantine Empire. On the death of Theodosius, the prætorians made over the purple to Pulcheria herself, and she was proclaimed Augusta, Imperatrix, and mistress of the world. But she soon, in mistrust of her solitary greatness, gave her hand, charged henceforth with the burden of empire, to Marcian, an aged soldier, from whom she obtained a promise of sisterly respect; and the Roman world enjoyed some years of greatness and glory under the united sway of Marcian and Pulcheria. For when Attila, thinking it was still the time when eunuchs governed the court, demanded the accustomed tribute from the Empire of the West, he received as the answer of the Empress, "I have only gold for my friends, but for my foes iron;" and it was necessary to attain the respect of the barbarian that the throne of Constantine should be occupied by a woman, who was at once a Christian and a saint.* We insist upon the workings of Christianity in the manners of the fifth century, because then, as ever, the Church was labouring not for the present only, but for the ages which were to follow. It was essential that the idea of the Christian family

* St. Leo bears her witness that in lending her influence to the condemnation of Nestorius and Eutyches, she had given peace to the religious world.

should be founded before the barbarians came to trouble it with their disorders. For the instinct which they brought might easily have perished had it not encountered examples which might develop and enlarge it. Nor did they always show respect towards women, for history relates that the Thuringians, who had invaded Gaul in the commencement of the sixth century, and had carried off three hundred young girls, fastened them with stakes to the ground, and then drove their chariots over their bodies. Moreover, as Tacitus informs us, the barbarians practised polygamy, and their chiefs gloried in the number of their wives. Amongst the Germans it was customary to buy and sell concubines, and the dying chief often caused the women who had shared his couch to attend him on his funeral pyre.

Therefore Christianity had to teach the barbarians a constant respect for women, and if it found some succour it encountered more dangers in their native instincts. Theodoric and Gondebald, too, hastened to borrow from the Theodosian code that constitution concerning divorce which had been enacted by Constantine, and by the help of such texts the barbarian monarchs hoped to introduce, if not simultaneous, at least successive polygamy.* It was this instinct which caused the Merovingian kings to indulge in a number of wives, and it is well known how St. Columba, having reproached Brunehault with her care in furnishing her son's seraglio, was exiled and forced to find a resting-place amongst the solitudes of Switzerland, in company with bears and wild beasts, who were more amenable than his fellow-men to his wonder-working hands. And the

* V. edict of Theodosius, c. liv.; and the laws of the Burgundians, tit. iii. sect. 3.

same question which was mooted during all the dark ages was renewed in the time of King Lothaire, who desired to repudiate his wife Teutberge, but was resisted by Nicholas I. declaring as a sole answer to all his importunities that he would never suffer such an irregularity to gain ground, and encourage men who grew weary of their wives. It also reappeared in the struggle between Pope Gregory VII. and the Emperor Henry IV., whose real aim in laying his hands on the right of investiture was to annul his marriage with Bertha, the daughter of the Margrave of Saxony; again between Innocent III. and Philip Augustus; and finally, in the sixteenth century, between Henry VIII. and Clement VII., affording the remarkable spectacle of the Papacy consenting to see the schism of the former rather than assent to his adultery, to lose a province of the Christian empire rather than outrage the dogma which had regenerated the Christian family. It was the work of twelve centuries to struggle against the violent instincts of the sons of the North, who had abjured none of the passions of the flesh; so long was the strife needed in order to bring out in their full bloom those delicate feelings which had existed indeed deep in the bosom of the Christian society, destined to a momentary eclipse, but to a later reappearance, and which constitute in our own day all the purity and all the charm of modern civilization.

It was, then, upon the condition of their exalted place in the family life that women undertook so large a share in the task of civilization, and therefore were these honoured beings able to bring their barbarous husbands one after another, and with them the people they ruled, to the faith of Christ. It is enough to name Clotilda

and Clovis, Bertha and Ethelbert, Theodolinda and Lothaire, appearing as conductors of their respective nations, whom they drew, as if by enchantment, after the sweep of their royal robes, and tracing out the way in which their descendants were to march. And so great was the confidence with which these queenly women inspired these half-barbarous races, that the Germans, Franks, Saxons, and Spaniards, who gloried in spurning the idea of obedience, yet did not shrink from submitting to a female sovereign.

Yet these premisses must not lead us to conclude that Christianity threw down the barriers of nature, by desiring to plunge women into public life, and so establish that absolute equality which has been dreamed of by the materialism of our own epoch. Not thus did the Church understand the matter, for Christianity is too spiritualistic for such an idea. The part to be played by its women was in some sort to be analogous to that of the guardian angels. They were to guide the world, but to remain invisible. The angels became rarely visible, and then only at moments of supreme danger, as the angel Raphael appeared to the young Tobias, and so it is only on certain long predestined occasions that the empire of women can be seen, and the saving angels of Christian society are manifest under the names of a Blanche of Castille or of a Joan of Arc.

But we have paused to mark the rehabilitation of woman in the prevailing order of manners, in order the better to study her rank and influence in the world of letters; and pursuing this our proper sphere and duty, we shall find ourselves in new paths, and so quit, to return no more to it, the hackneyed theme of the

restoration of woman under Christian influences. As the Church had every hope of female intelligence, and was bound to refuse nothing that could tend to its improvement, she took great care of their education. And we possess some striking documents on this very point amongst the correspondence of St. Jerome. He showed in the two letters which he wrote to Laeta and Gaudentius on the education of their two daughters, that, like all great minds, he had no contempt for small things, and bade them commence their educational cares from the nurse's arms; and following the Roman who attributed the earliest corruption of eloquence to the bad lessons of nurses and pedagogues, so St. Jerome wished for a modest and grave nurse, who had often the name of God upon her lips. He desired that they should refrain from piercing the ears of children, or staining their faces with carmine and ochre, or giving to their hair that red hue which was but a first reflexion of hell, and begged that they should speedily be taught to clear their intellects, and that letters of ivory should be placed in their hands that they might learn the formation of words; that a number of Greek verses should be committed to their memory first, to be followed by Latin studies; and especially that they should not be left ignorant of Holy Writ; nor, lastly, of the writings of the Fathers.*

Such was the severe and solid system of education laid down by St. Jerome for the use of the daughters of the Church; nor need it surprise us to find him offering his own services towards instruction, and writing thus to Laeta from his desert retreat. "I will carry her on my own shoulders, and will confirm her

* St. Hieronym. ad Laetam, ep. cxii.

stammering lips; my task will be more glorious than that of Aristotle, for he trained a king who was destined to perish by the poison of the Babylonians, while I shall raise a servant and spouse for Christ, an inheritress of heaven."* After this it may seem surprising that the women of the early ages of Christianity have left such scanty writings, for we can only cite a few excellent letters, which, however, will always do them credit; and some verses, like those of Faltonia Proba, who composed a canto in honour of the faith. These are the sole and feeble claims put forth by these Christian women of primitive times to literary distinction; or rather they gloried more in understanding that in the world of letters, as in that of politics, their influence was to be invisible—their mission to inspire far rather than to shine.

We never find that women inspired any serious works in classic time: if we run through the familiar letters of Cicero we see few, amongst those of Symmachus none, addressed to females. Seneca, indeed, wrote in a consoling strain to his mother and to Helvia; that haughty spirit which so utterly disdained the other sex, was once moved by their tears. But Christianity brought with it an imitation of the example given by the Saviour in teaching the woman of Samaria. St. John corresponded with Electa, and all the Fathers of the Church wrote for women. Tertullian composed two books "Ad Uxorem Suam," and the treatises "De Cultu Fæminarum" and "De Velandis Virginibus;" that proud and captious mind bent before the handmaids of Christ, and declared himself the last and the least of their servants. Similar lan-

* St. Hieronym. ad Gaudentium, ep. cxxviii.

guage was used by St. Cyprian in his work "De Habitu Virginum," while St. Ambrose composed three works upon virginity, and addressing himself to the destined readers of his books, said:—"If you find some flowers herein, they are those of your virtues, and from you proceeds all the perfume of the book." *

Courtesy proper to so great a soul, but destined to be even excelled by that of St. Augustine. Augustine was especially the work of his mother, St. Monica, who had twice, as it were, given birth to him—once in the sufferings of the body, the second time in the agonies of the spirit; and in the latter she had borne him for eternity. We remember the tears she shed over the errors of her son, and the joy she had experienced from the bishops prophesying that the child of so much weeping could not perish; how her joy was the chiefest on his conversion; her place the highest at the philosophical discussions of Cassiciacum; and how, to his good mother's question whether philosophizing women had ever been read of in the books, Augustine asked, in reply, whether philosophy was anything else than the love of wisdom. Monica, who had long loved her God, was far nearer philosophy than many. "For after all, my mother," he said, "do you not fear death far less than many would-be sages?" adding that he would willingly become her disciple. He also, instead of repelling, drew her on to take a part in their discussions, declaring that if his books fell into any hands in the future, no reader should reproach him for giving to his mother the expression of her opinion. Whilst they were treating of the Supreme Good,

* St. Ambros. De Virginibus, ad Marcellinam sororem suam, lib. ii. s. vi.

Monica ventured the proposition that the soul had no natural aliment but science, the intelligence but truth, which was in accord with sentiments in the "Hortensius" of Cicero. Delighted with the coincidence, St. Augustine declared that his mother had carried off the palm in philosophy; that he owed to her his thought for truth, his desire to know nothing besides truth, and referred to the inspiration which he had drawn from her his entire vocation as a thinker. And, in fact, he justified this idea in that ever memorable passage of his "Confessions," in which he relates how that a few days before the death of Monica, he was standing with her near to a window at Ostia, discoursing of the future life, of God and of eternity, and touched by a momentary effort of the soul the things of which they were speaking. Monica ended the interview by declaring that no more work remained for her on earth; and she died shortly afterwards, with her task accomplished, for she had moulded her son according to the method which God had appointed to her.* St. Augustine many a time in after life trod again the road which he had followed with his mother in that last conversation; he came back again and again to God, and reached a high point in the knowledge of Him; but it was always by the same track, repassing the same places, into which, then but an inexperienced neophyte, he had first adventured himself under his mother's care.

But St. Augustine, as a genius, was of tender nature, and he might well one day have been carried onwards by a mother's hand. The case of St. Jerome seemed different, and it is a marvel how that man of fiery and

* Confessiones, lib. ix. c. ix.

untamed spirit, of ardent and undisciplined imagination, then conquered by Christianity, was only developed under the same influences by Christian women. We have already noticed St. Jerome at Rome, but the fact is less known that at that time he was fifty-two years of age and had written little—merely two or three letters and some treatises of mediocre importance. These represented the entire produce of that long life which had ripened in the desert. But his reputation brought around him in numbers the most illustrious Christian matrons of Rome, such as Paula and her two daughters Eustochia and Blæsilla, Felicitas, Albina, Marcellina, the widow Læa, and the virgin Asella Marcella, at whose house the others assembled to listen to the great doctor. She had a passionate love of the Scriptures, and never could see Jerome without plying him with questions, multiplying objections, and never leaving him till her view was clear. When he had left Rome she became the soul of that little society of Christian women, answered their questions with the tact and delicacy which is the special attribute of women, and saying always that such and such was the doctrine of St. Jerome or some other doctor —never speaking in her own name. After his return to Bethlehem, St. Jerome was still pursued by the questionings of these noble matrons, and, moreover, some of them came and joined him, that they might recover the light which they could not surrender. They followed him into his desert solitude, and thus we see Fabiola crossing the seas, ostensibly to visit the Holy Places, but in fact to read the Book of Numbers again with Jerome, and to receive his explanation of chapters which she could not comprehend. Paula then also become a widow, and her daughter Eustochia, renouncing the

glory and fortune which surrounded them, also crossed the Mediterranean and arrived at Antioch, from which city these women, of the class which once required the support of their eunuchs' arms for a journey into the streets of Rome, mounted upon asses, and set out for Jerusalem over the rugged passes of Lebanon. On their arrival at Bethlehem they founded a monastery and three convents, and the rule of the latter made a study of Holy Writ incumbent upon every nun. These institutions were in fact schools of theology and language, since the interpretation of Scripture was necessarily founded upon the study of foreign tongues; and these Roman ladies were adepts in Latin, in Greek, and in Hebrew. Paula, in fact, used to chant the Psalms in Hebrew, and on her deathbed answered St. Jerome, when he asked if she suffered, in Greek. They left him no peace, these two women, and pressed him to read the whole Bible from end to end with them, and to comment on its details. For long he refused, and when at last he acceded, found that he had undertaken a burdensome task, as they would not permit him to ignore anything, and answered his plea of want of personal knowledge by a demand for the most probable opinion. It was for them that he undertook his great work in the translation of the Scripture, which not only redounded then to his glory and influence, but made him the master of Christian prose for succeeding generations. The Vulgate was begun simply to satisfy the keen impatience of Paula and Eustochia; it was to them that he dedicated the books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Ruth, Esther, the Psalms, Isaiah, and the twelve minor Prophets, declaring in his preface that to them was owing the influence which caused him again to

take up the plough and trace so laborious a furrow, to remove the brambles which ceaselessly germinate in the field of Holy Scripture, and that to them must lie his appeal from all who would doubt the exactness of the version. "You are," he said, "competent judges in controversies as to texts upon the original Hebrew; compare it with my translation, and see if I have risked a single word." * Whilst as he was the object of every kind of accusation, as his translation troubled some as being a novelty, and reduced to despair all the priests who possessed magnificent copies, parchments lettered in gold, to whom he said in fact that newer ones were required, and who preferred cavilling at the exactness of the fresh translation to admitting so mortifying a truth, he found a resource and comfort in the prayers of Paula and Eustochia, and begged them to take up his defence against the tongues of his revilers.

Thus did these women of Christendom emulate the example of their German sisters; like them they were present at the conflict, but it was a struggle of the mind; they also predicted its sequel, assured it a happy issue, and tended the wounds dealt in the controversy. And in this manner was a Christian school of women constituted which was destined to continue through many centuries, and be the exemplar of that sight of many persons of moral and social excellence who also did not shrink from growing pale over the holy books and writings of the great doctors of the Church, which was the wonder of the seventeenth century; for the women of the Church had already taken possession of that double work of inspiring and of conciliating which will be theirs until the end.

* See letter xcii. to Paula and Eustochia.

But if they gained every advantage in the order of knowledge, there was danger of their losing ground in that of art and that of poetry. For it seemed that as women had been sources of frequent and perilous inspiration to the sculptors and poets of Paganism, so Christianity might seek to efface for ever the images which appealed too forcibly to the imagination and the awakened passions. Yet this was not the case, and a visit to the Catacombs, those rugged homes of the most austere Christianity, will show us, amidst the relics of persecution and memories of the menacing guards, who were perhaps then at the entrance, on the point of laying hands upon the priest at the altar and the faithful who surrounded him, in the light of torches and lamps, a certain number of paintings decorating the sanctuaries, and developing into garlands around the altars. Of the subject of these pictures we shall treat in another place; but may remark that the most frequent after the Good Shepherd is that of the figure of a woman at prayer, alone, with arms crossed, the head often veiled, dressed in the simple fashion preached by Tertullian and St. Cyprian. In other places, it appears as a martyr at the place of execution, dressed like Felicitas and Perpetua, when they stood in the arena, without veil or ornaments, despoiled of those necklaces and emeralds which would have balked the sword of the headsman, covered only with the *stola*, a simple white robe, with a girdle of purple descending to the feet as her sole adornment, the eyes and hands alike raised towards heaven. It was thus under the features of a woman that Prayer was symbolized by the Christians, as if persuaded that

the orisons, which were accompanied by the humility and gentleness of so holy a being, would move the Almighty more easily. She was again represented in the company of two aged men, who stood on each side, and supported her uplifted arms; and sometimes two names were written underneath the painting. The two elders were named Peter and Paul; and the woman who stood between them praying, with outstretched hands, was named Mary. So this figure, which appeared always side by side with that of Christ, was the first representation of the Madonna, of that long course of Byzantine Virgins which were destined to inspire the painters of the Middle Age, the regenerated woman who was to recreate art for the modern world.

But it was not sufficient for Christian womanhood to take up with a reforming hand painting and the plastic arts; it was also to enter the domain of poetry, then overflowing with the ardours of Sappho and Alcæus, burning with the passion which had been kindled by the women of old time—poetry which was to be purified by being sprinkled with the blood of those virgin martyrs who were to be for the future the heroines and inspirers of the Christian bards. And it is a touching fact, that the first woman who moved and drew forth new accents from poetry for the Church, was a young girl, St. Agnes, who was martyred at Rome at the close of the persecution under Diocletian, A.D. 310. A sort of pre-eminence was attached to her, as the youngest born of the numerous family of martyrs. All the efforts of the imagination of the time, added to love, respect, and enthusiasm, were united, as it were, to compose her

crown. A short time after her death, one of the most beautiful of Christian legends was related as to her. It told how, as her parents, some little time after her martyrdom, were spending a vigil in prayer at her tomb, the virgin Agnes appeared in the brightest light, amidst a multitude of virgins clothed like herself in long robes of gold, and having a snow-white lamb at her side, she addressed her weeping parents, and said, "Weep not, for you see that I have been admitted into this company in the abodes of light, and that I am united now with those whom I have ever loved."

Her life seemed to have attracted the notice and charmed the respect of all the men of her age, and no sacred topic has been more often celebrated in the discourses of the eloquent, or the verses of poets. Three times did St. Ambrose return to it, and at the beginning of his work "De Virginitate," took pleasure in honouring the action of the maiden who had braved her executioners, and had advanced to the place of slaughter with a more triumphant step than if she had been about to bestow her hand on the most illustrious scion of the consular houses. But the poets, especially, claimed it as their own, and the Pope St. Damasus, in the first place, who lived at the end of the fourth century, sang in a short but forcible poem of the martyrdom and glory of St. Agnes. "How, at the mournful signal given by the trumpet, she rushed from the arms of her nurse, trampled under foot the tyrant's menace; and how, when her noble body was given over to the flames, her young soul conquered their great terror, and how she covered herself with her long hair for fear lest her eyes, then about to perish, should not behold the temple of God."

Viribus immensum parvis superasse timorem,
Nudam profusum crinem per membra dedisse
Ne Domini templum facies peritura videret.*

And those beautiful verses are equalled by the hymn composed by Prudentius, a poet of the beginning of the fifth century, in honour of St. Agnes, in which he narrates at length the history of the martyr, and crowns her by the following invocation:—

"O happy Virgin, O new-born glory, noble dweller in the heavenly palace, lower towards our mire your brow, now girt with a double diadem. The light of your favouring countenance, if it penetrates therein, will purify my heart. For every place on which you deign to cast your eyes becomes pure; every place on which your foot, so brilliant in its whiteness, has alighted." Surely this poetry has recovered the ancient fire, but the path along which it journeys is one which leads to heaven.†

And yet another breath was to proceed from the lips of women, to penetrate the depths of Christian poesy, and reveal therein a fertility, of which succeeding ages would reap the fruits, in the shape of Platonic love. This sentiment only just began with Plato to free itself from the obscurity and depravity of the Greek idea of love; but when a Christian, who had been touched by its inspiring influence, wrote for the first time in prose, a prose instinct with poetry, when Hermas composed his wonderful "Shepherd," Platonic love found place in its pages, but suffered no surroundings which were not chaste. He related that in his youth he had loved, for her beauty and her virtue, a young

* Biblioth. Patrum. tom. iv. 543.
† Prudent. Peristephanon, xiv. 133.

Christian slave, the property of his tutor, and often had said, "Happy should I be had I such a wife." But some time after he wandered into the country, alone with his thoughts, honouring the creatures of God which seemed so fair; and at last, falling asleep, dreamed that he was on his knees at prayer in a wild spot, and as he prayed the sky opened, showing to him the maiden he had loved, who said to him,—

"Hail, Hermas!" "My lady, what do you there?" "I have been called hither to accuse you before God." "My lady, if I have sinned against you, when was it, and where? Have I not always regarded you as my mistress, and respected you as my sister?" "An evil desire has found its way into your heart; pray to God, and He will pardon you your sin." And the heaven closed again.* Thus commenced the love which questions even the legitimate object of marriage, which desires nothing in its own interest, but is consistent in its sacrifice and devotion, and becomes faulty in the moment that it ceases to forget itself.

However, we soon recognize this as the essential principle of Christian literature in the future. The barbarians came, but Christendom had already secured their daughters. Frank and Saxon virgins filled the cloisters, and the saints of time wrote for them as the Fathers had done for their sisters of the primitive ages. Fortunatus, during his long sojourn at Poitiers, composed poetry for St. Radagonde, the wife of King Clotaire, and St. Boniface, in the midst of his great apostolic labours, addressed verses to the beautiful Lioba, abbess of an English cloister, who was destined later to follow in his steps, continue his missionary

* Hermas. Pastor. Visio prima.

work, and raise convents in the forests of Germany to serve for the education of the young barbarians. Alcuin also was to number amongst his disciples the daughters and nieces of Charlemagne, who demanded from him a commentary on St. John, and did not neglect to remind him that St. Jerome had not despised the entreaties of noble ladies, but had written them long letters in explanation of the obscure passages of prophecy, adding that there was less distance between Tours and Paris than between Bethlehem and Rome. And so he was unable to resist them; and from that time we see posterity carried away by his example, and Christian women gradually taking rank in theology and literature. In the tenth century Hroswitha, in the twelfth St. Hildegard, in later times St. Catherine of Siena, shared the glory of the greatest writers, and, lastly, St. Theresa, who stands on the threshold of modern times, and at whose genius the world is still wondering.

And thus their influence showed itself in continuance, when amidst the light of the sixteenth century some of the greatest minds appeared canvassing the respect of a certain number of superior women, such as Jacqueline Pascal, who shared her brother's toil, and thereby was associated in his fame; Madame de Longueville, who lent so favouring an influence to the genius of Nicole; Madame de Sévigné, Madame de la Fayette, Madame de Maintenon, and the other illustrious females who were destined to consummate the intellectual education of the world's most polished race.

If it effected so much for prose and for science, respect for women was the generating principle of poetry, the very soul of chivalry. Without the idea of

sacrifice, the whole essence of that poetry must have vanished; the knight was bound to serve his mistress disinterestedly, and the poet of chivalry was only suffered to sing of her upon the same condition. The worship which effected a purification in the minds of its votaries, became the dominating influence of all the poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; it enkindled the first troubadours, the first minnesinger, the early Italian poets, and was the presiding genius of Dante and Petrarch. For what, in fact, was Beatrice but a living personification of the divine intelligence, a symbolical representation, but at the same time a perfect and fascinating reality? What was Beatrice but an influence destined to purify the soul of Dante, and to free it from all its earthly constituents. The mere smile of the maiden as she passed sufficed to flood the poet's heart with joy, to give him peace, to lower his pride, to blot out his offences, and dispose him to virtue. Doubtless, Dante attributed too great a power to Beatrice; but, at least, it was a power that he had experienced. When he found her once more, as she appeared to him on the topmost point of purgatory, in the terrestrial paradise which he had reconstructed, it was not to receive flattery and empty praise, but blame for not having vowed to her a love that was pure enough, for having suffered his soul to be weighed down towards the perilous atmosphere of earth; and as the beautiful slave accused Hermas, so did Beatrice accuse Dante; and thus the unknown slave, whom Hermas had casually loved, stood, as it were, in the place of elder sister to Beatrice, to Laura, and the noble women whose task it was to strike the most brilliant chords of modern poetry.

We have before us, then, a spectacle which is rare in the annals of literature. Ages there are like the spring time of the year, when the human intellect flourishes throughout, but to reach down to the lowest roots, to the earliest germs of these flowers of the mind, to know from whence their life and sap may flow, is a pleasure but seldom tasted. But this is what we have just attained, and therefore we need pause no more to contemplate the blossoms which poetry put forth in the days of chivalry, the roots of which lay hidden deep in primitive Christendom.

In studying Christian manners, during the fifth century, we have witnessed the greatest intellectual revolution that has ever taken place. For literature is governed by intellect, but the mission of intellect is to instruct or to charm. It is his audience which moulds the orator; the crowd for whom he sings inspires and kindles the poet. Under the old order philosophers only spoke for a handful of select spirits, of the initiated, and of adepts; though the orator harangued the crowd which covered the market-places, that crowd was only composed of citizens. At Athens, the poets composed for the theatre, but it was only frequented by men who were free. The women of Rome attended the theatres, but the Latin poetry was scarcely intelligible to the vulgar, and could only be enjoyed by the cultured minority. Horace complained of this, knowing that, like Virgil, he could only be appreciated by, at most, the knights, and that his genius could never make itself felt in the lower ranks of the sovereign people. The literature of antiquity had appealed to but few, but Christian culture, on the other hand, was addressed to all. The Fathers com-

posed for slaves and for women, and St. John Chrysostom boasted, in the forcible language which we have cited, that the Church taught shoemakers and fullers to philosophize. They mounted the pulpit, not merely to address those who had the freedom of the city, but to all the freedmen, slaves, women, and children who were assembled in the same Basilica.

The invasion and settlement of the barbarians has been considered a grave event in the history of the human mind: and it was so, for they appeared to recreate the intelligence of humanity in affording to all who could speak or write a new crowd of auditors, bringing no wearied ears or dulled intellects, but ready to open hearts free till then, and disposed to shudder at and respond to everything that was truly worthy of admiration. It was a grave event, for the rush of that wave of fallow minds could not but modify the intellectual conditions of the world. But still not sufficient attention has been paid to a greater and more important inroad accomplished before that of the barbarians had begun—the invasion of the world of intellect by slaves, workmen, paupers, and women—the vast majority, in fact, of humanity—who came, not to demand empire, goods, or property, as did the barbarians later, but their rightful share in the enjoyment of truth, of the good and of the beautiful, which has been promised to and is the just due of all.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE LATIN LANGUAGE BECAME CHRISTIAN.

We have found that, at the moment in which the barbarians stormed the gates of the Empire, two kinds of civilization existed face to face. On the one side stood the civilization of Paganism, powerless to receive into itself, to enlighten, and, above all, to soften the terrible guests whom Providence had sent; condemned, in consequence, to perish, though not entirely and without a struggle, nor without leaving to religion, legislation, and literature dangers and advantages which the following ages would reap; whilst, on the other, Christian dogma, then strong enough to proceed in victory from the debates of theology, and to produce, in the writings of St. Augustine, a philosophy of its own, was capable of building up an entirely new society. And the elements of this already existed in that hierarchy whose antiquity we have demonstrated, and in that code of manners which had been the means of receiving slaves, the poor, and women into the life of the spirit; whilst it was the case that this inroad of those whom the old world had disowned, whom the ancient society had despised, paved the way for, preceded, and surpassed in its proportions that other invasion of the barbarians; for it had already enlarged the audience to whom human eloquence could address itself, and in

so doing had renewed the inspiration innate in literature.

We will now study the early efforts of the Christian literature, and search out the method whereby the regenerating principle, descending all the degrees of thought, took possession of eloquence, of history, and of poetry, and moulded them from the fifth century into those very forms which, in the Middle Age, appeared expanding with such vigour and brilliancy. But it was necessary, first, that Christian literature should find its proper language, and enter upon the still more difficult task of composing it out of existing but opposing elements. Latin was, of necessity, the language of the Western Church, as being the natural tongue of the dying society whose last moments she was called upon to console, and the borrowed language of that host of Germans, of Franks, and of Vandals, who were already making their way on to the lands of the frontier, into the ranks of the army, and even the high offices of the Empire. But it remains to us to discover the miracle whereby Latin, the old pagan tongue, which preserved the names of its thirty thousand deities, which was also tainted with the indecencies of Petronius and of Martial, became not only Christian, but the language of the Church and of the Middle Age; how the idiom which seemed destined to perish with that world from whose side it had proceeded, remained a living language upon the tomb of an extinct society, so that, throughout the mediæval period, it was continually used in preaching, in oratory, and in teaching; and noble races, even in our own day, have refused to abjure the Latin language, as forming a certain portion of their liberties. It is this trans-

formation, then—one without parallel in the history of the human mind—which we will now take into account, as it amply deserves some measure of our attention; and our thorny task has been facilitated and smoothed by the work of a contemporary historian, who has shown how the same revolution was accomplished at Alexandria* in the language of Greece.

Nothing, indeed, could seem, at first sight, worse adapted for the ideas of Christianity than that old Latin tongue which in its primitive harshness seemed only fitted for war, for agriculture, and for litigation. Mark its harsh, terse, and monosyllabic forms, befitting the idiom of a people who had no leisure to lose themselves, like the Greeks, in long discussions, nor to waste their time upon the marble steps of the Parthenon, or beneath the porticoes of the Agora. It points, on the contrary, to men of business, less greedy of ideas than of pelf, meeting each other by chance on a dusty road, scorched by the rays of the sun, and exchanging briefly, in the tersest and most elliptical language, words expressive of their rights, of their longings, and of their hopes. Thus, if war were in the question, all the expressions referring to it were short and forcible: *Mars, vis*—war, strength; *æs*, the iron from which weapons were forged. If they talked of the country, we must not expect its beauties to be celebrated in harmonious and ear-filling expressions, but in monosyllables: *flos, frux, bos*—flower, fruit, ox; everything which appertained to the agriculturalist was ended by a short sound, as contracted as the moment which was allotted to him for the sowing or reaping of his crops. And the language of business had its germ

* M. Egger.

in those compressed expressions which seemed to concentrate the whole energy of a litigious and law-making race: *jus, fas, lex, res*—right, justice, law, thing; the essential roots, in fine, of the language of law.

Doubtless on a closer view one can discover the affinity of Latin to the Æolian dialect, and see traces of a remote parentage amongst the languages of the East; as, for instance, Sanscrit. But, on setting aside these useful and luminous theories of science, in order to consider that alone which characterizes the genius of the people, it is impossible not to recognize in the speakers of that harsh and concise idiom the same men whom Plautus, at the opening of his "Amphitryon," caused the god Mercury to address, and for whom he wished no soft and fascinating day-dreams beneath cool shades, nor delights of wit or of imagination, but a speedy enrichment through a solid and enduring gain.* So vulgar was the character of the people whose language was destined to be the universal dialect of civilization.

But as soon as the manners of Greece had invaded Rome, her orators set themselves to model the Latin tongue after Grecian forms. Thus an artificial culture arose which, though confined to a small number of enlightened minds, was pushed to an incredible pitch of ardour and of perfection. Cicero trained himself to declaim in the Greek language, as offering greater wealth than his own in resource and ornament. Nay, more, not content with stealing the figures, reasonings,

* Et ut res rationesque vestrorum omnium
Bene expedire voltis peregreque et domi,
Bonoque atque amplo auctare perpetuo lucro,
Quasque incepistis res quasque inceptabitis.
PLAUT. *Amphitr.* prolog. v. 5.

and hardy flights of the oratorical compositions of Demosthenes and of Æschines, he sought also for the secrets of their eloquence and the mysteries of the harmony whereby the speakers of Greece used to flatter the itching ears of its multitudes. So we see Cicero making research with infinite art and prodigious subtlety in the works of Aristotle, of Ephorus, and of Theopompus, for the diverse measures which could be introduced into an oratorical period, to render it richer and more satisfying to the ear. Nor must we believe that he suffered his speeches to be composed of long and short syllables at haphazard: a certain number of trochees, pæans, and other feet was indispensable, and he continually expatiated on a speech which he had heard in his youth, when Carbo, tribune of the people, in the peroration to a fierce invective against his political adversaries, won the popular applause by a phrase which was crowned by the most harmonious ditrochee that had ever been heard—*Patris dictum sapiens temeritas filii comprobavit.* The word *comprobavit*, with its two long alternated by two short syllables, had so ravished the ear of the audience that the orator was surrounded by one long murmur of approbation. To such a point were the refinements of euphony insisted upon by this people, who also expected that a flute-player would always accompany the orator in the tribune, and keep his voice to the proper level.

A like measure of care, zeal, and laborious application, was also bestowed upon poetry. The metres of Greece had passed in succession, first into the epic, and then into the dramatic poetry of the Latins; and finally Catullus and Horace had borrowed from the

lyric poets of the Æolian school the most subtle and delicate combinations that were permitted by the harmony of their beautiful language.

Thus a time came when Greece possessed no treasure upon which Rome had not laid her hand; and the hour, though it was but a brief one, arrived which saw the perfect maturity of the Latin language, capable then of pursuing with Cicero the loftiest flight vouchsafed to the intellect of man, as far as the threshold of the infinite; capable also of diving with the jurisconsults into the lowest depths, the most delicate subtleties, and the remotest windings of human affairs; and capable, moreover, with Virgil, of drawing from syllables, till then harsh and inharmonious, sounds which were destined to charm the ears of a long posterity, to charm them even now; poetic lamentations which caused Octavia to faint away in the arms of Augustus.

Such was the grandeur and beauty of that Latin tongue, to which too high a tribute cannot be paid, in that incomparable but fugitive period which we have noticed. But this artificial culture could not be of long duration, for languages contain an inherent law of decomposition which wills that, on arriving at a certain stage of maturity, like the fruits, they should fall, open out, and render to the world seeds from which newer languages might germinate. Whilst Roman society, in its most elegant and polished portion, clung to all the delicate perfections of an exquisite language, the people were without the capacity of raising themselves to so high a level, without the patience necessary to a respect for the exigencies of patrician ears. For, in fact, two kinds of rules exist in a literary language,

those rules of euphony which regard art, and those of logic which look towards science; and the people, pressed with business, articulating carelessly and without regard to purity, spoke as the occasion called, and thereby violated the laws of euphony, whilst they outraged the rules of logic by erroneous constructions.

So it followed of necessity, that in a short time a popular and imperfect language—a dialect, in fact, of some coarseness—was formed beneath the learned Latin, and circulated amongst the mighty multitude which thronged in Rome and her provinces. Nor are traces wanting of the colloquial diction which prevailed in the streets of the city, and which the comedians employed as a means of bringing themselves within the sympathies of their audiences; for it appears in the works of Plautus, and in the inscriptions we may find still stranger instances wherein the rules of grammar were incredibly violated. For instance, *cum conjugem suam, pietatem causâ, templum quod est in palatium*, with numerous other expressions of like nature.

Thus the Latin language was in process of decomposition as early as the time of Cicero, who used to point to the age of Scipio Africanus as its golden era. To Cicero, as to many others, the century in which he lived gave him a sad impression, as being smitten with decay; and so he placed the apogee in a time remote from his own. It was, he said, the privilege of the age of Scipio to speak as well as to live with purity; but since then speech had been corrupted by a host of foreigners. Quintilian again said, later, that the whole language had altered, and bears witness that more than once, when a tragic spectacle had roused the emotions of the audience, the exclamations which burst

from all sides of the theatre had comprised some barbarous elements, which, as it were, belied the purity of the language which the poet had designed.*

Accordingly, from the earliest days of the Empire corruption had set in, the Latin language was perishing, and far from its desolation being the work of Christianity, it was only through the Church that it was destined to revive.

Antiquity had been divided by three influences, the genius of the East, namely, that of contemplation and of symbolism, which led through the observation of Nature to a discovery of the language of the Creator, and that of true poetry—for poetry is nothing but a divine contemplation of things of earth, an ideal conception of the real; secondly, the genius of Greece, specially adapted to speculation and to philosophy, with the capacity of adapting expressions of refined accuracy to all the shades of human thought, which sufficed for all the wants of the past—may we not say, also, for all those of our own time?—for it is from that language that we ask for words to designate the discoveries of the age; and, lastly, the Latin genius, which was that of action, of law, and of empire. In order that these three influences should subsist, it was necessary that the triple spirit of the East, of Greece, and of Rome, should in some measure form the soul of the nascent nations. The Latin tongue offered to the Church a marvellous engine of legislation and government, fitted for the administration of her vast society; but it was also required that the language of action should become that of speculation, that its stiff and pedantic nature should

* "Tota sæpe theatra, et omnem circi turbam exclamasse barbare scimus."—QUINT. *Instit. Or.* lib. i. c. 6.

be made supple and popular, that it should be endowed with the qualities which it wanted in order to satisfy the reason with a regularity and exactitude cognate to that of the Greek terminology, and to charm the imagination with splendours kindred to those of the Oriental symbolism. This end Christianity effected by a work which, though humble at first sight, like everything which is truly humble, concealed one of the boldest and grandest ideas that have ever been conceived, by the translation of the Bible called the Vulgate. A certain man, who was perfectly versed in Latin literature, steeped in all the culture, and nearly all the passions, of the Roman world, after having for some time mastered all the enlightenment and gazed, though from some distance, at the pleasures of that debased society, came to his senses and fled in terror into the desert. He sought an asylum at Bethlehem, amidst its solitudes, which were but beginning to be peopled by the first monks; and therein Jerome forced himself to repel the memories which he had carried from Rome, and the voluptuous images which troubled his thoughts even in the place of his meditation and fasting. The works of Cicero and of Plato were never absent from his hands, and yet they recalled and echoed too loudly the sounds of that old world which he longed to forget. To subdue himself, and conquer the flesh, as he tells us, he undertook the study of Hebrew, and put himself under the tuition, and even at the service, of a monk, a converted Jew, who, greedy of interpretation, taught him, in a quarry and by night—for fear lest his countrymen should detect him—the secrets of the sacred language. "And I," said he, "all nourished as I still was with the flower of Cicero's eloquence, with the sweetness of

Pliny and Fronto, and the charm of Virgil, began to stammer harsh and breath-disturbing words, *stridentia anhelantiaque verba.* I tied myself down to that difficult language, like a slave to a millstone, buried myself in the darkness of that barbarous idiom like a miner in a cavern, in which, after a long time, he at last perceives a gleam of light; so in its obscure depths I began to find unknown joys, and later, from the bitter seedtime of my study I gathered in the fruits of an infinite sweetness."

Such was the language of St. Jerome—we may recognize it by the savage energy of its eloquence. The harvest which he desired to reap, the fruits of his bitter study, were the sacred books which he proposed to translate from the Hebrew, and thus to rectify whatever errors might have crept into the visions framed upon the Septuagint, as well as to deprive the Jews of all subterfuge, and cut from under their feet the objections upon which they stood as to the supposed discrepancy between the Hebrew original and the Greek version. It was this motive that impelled St. Jerome to undertake the translation of the Bible, and nothing less than an inspiration of faith, a strong conviction of duty, was necessary to enable him to brave the intrinsic difficulty of the work, and the opposition offered by certain Christians who possessed the older translations, and were quite content to keep them; for, as Jerome said, there were people who prided themselves on having fine manuscripts, without caring for their accuracy. But his native genius and enthusiasm was hardly sufficient to carry him through all the difficulties and disgusts of his long labours. He was sustained by the friendship and the docility of St. Paula, of Eustochia,

and the other Roman ladies who shared in his toil; and with their encouragement and help he advanced in his work, following a system of translation which he arranged himself, and which consisted in the continued practice of two rules. The first and the most common was to preserve, as far as was possible, without injuring, the sense, the elegance, and euphony of the language into which the translation was made. For thus, he said, had Cicero translated Plato, Xenophon, and Demosthenes; thus the Greek comedians had passed on to the Latin stage under the auspices of Plautus, Terence, and Catullus; and in this manner did he propose to transfer the beauties of the Hebrew language into the Latin text without marring the grammatical purity of the latter. But the second rule, to which he sacrificed the former, was to the effect that when it was a question of preserving the sense in translating an obscure passage, nothing besides should be considered, and that the language used in translating must be violated rather than that any of the energy of the original should be lost, for the Divine text must be correctly rendered at any cost. This, then, St. Jerome desired, proposed to himself, and pursued with a marvellous boldness. He did not ignore the barbarisms that of necessity crept into his style, and entreated Paulinus not to suffer himself to be repelled by the rude and simple language of Scripture. In another place he begged that his reader should not demand of him an elegance which he had lost through contact with the Hebrews.

Thus was produced the translation of the Old Testament into Latin, named the Vulgate, which was one of the greatest achievements of the human mind, and

has not been sufficiently studied under that point of view. Through its means the whole current of the Eastern genius entered, so to speak, into the Roman civilization; and yet not so much by the small number of untranslatable Hebrew words, which St. Jerome preserved, and which need not be taken much into account. For it was not by a mere adoption of the Alleluia and the Amen that the Latin tongue was enriched, but by the bold constructions which it appropriated, the unexpected alliance of words, the wonderful abundance of images, by that Scriptural symbolism in which events and persons are figures of other events and of other persons; in which Noah, Abraham, and Jacob have their chief value as types and foreshadowings of Christianity; in which the solemn nuptials of Solomon represented the nuptials that were to be between the Messiah and the Church; in which, finally, every image of the past had reference to the future. And this gave rise to a phenomenon which has somewhat escaped observation in the depths of the Hebrew genius —the parallelism which is of its essence, and which was now added to the newly gained riches of the language of Christendom.

The Greeks nearly always founded their compositions upon the number three. Thus their odes were formed of a strophe, an antistrophe, and an epode; and the Greek grammar comprised three tenses—the past, the present, and the future. But the Hebrew arrangement was different, and we find the verses of their psalms always divided into two nearly equal parts, counterbalancing and responding to one another. That language, with the peculiarity which was also common to the other Semitic languages, possessed only two tenses.

Hebrew has in it no present, and rightly, for what is the present but an invisible point of intersection between the past and the future, which can always be divided between the one and the other, and is, therefore, non-existent as the present. It comprised only a past and a future tense, like the Hebrew people itself, which has no present destiny, and recognizes only that of the past, which it calls tradition, and that which is yet to come, which it knows as prophecy. Hence, in its language and its poetry, the novel characteristic of the people effected that the two periods of time, tradition which had been, and prophecy which would be fulfilled, stood face to face, calling and responding the one to the other; and that the idea of the present was effaced by these two tenses, which were continually changing their names and positions between themselves. For often did the prophets make use of the past to express futurity; Isaiah related the passion of Christ as an accomplished event, whilst, on the other hand, Moses, speaking of the alliance concluded between the people of Israel and its God, placed his facts in the future. This predestined peculiarity of the Hebrew language, which, as it were, effaced time, and produced that sentiment of unity which was at the root of Eastern ideas, entered with it into the Latin tongue, and imprinted on it a stamp, which was to mark the whole literature of the Middle Age, for it was the notion of eternity which came into the Latin at the time of which we are treating, penetrated it thoroughly, and remained rooted in its soil.

We come to a second point. Only a portion of the Old Testament had been written in and translated from the Hebrew; but the remainder, with the whole New

Testament—those Apostolic epistles which contained the most essential analysis of Christian theology, and the works of the early Fathers—was in Greek. It had been of necessity translated in primitive times into Latin, for the purposes of religion ; but now it also passed beneath the hand of St. Jerome, as the Pope Damasus required that he should completely revise the Scriptures of the New as well as those of the Ancient Covenant. Consequently, the theological treasures of Greek Christianity passed in their turn into the Latin language; and here again we may take small notice of the new words, which must, perforce, have been borrowed from the Greek—as, for instance, all that related to the liturgy and to the hierarchy—*episcopus, presbyter, diaconus*, the name of *Christ*, the *Paraclete*, the words *baptism, anathema*, and many others; for such gains cannot be counted as conquests to a language, and merely resemble the stone which the avalanche gathers up in its course, but which is no part of itself.

The lesson gathered by the Latin tongue from the school of the Greek Christianity did not consist either in those oratorical artifices and tricks of number and rhythm which had struck Cicero, but rather in supplying from its stores the insufficiency of her own philosophic terms, an insufficiency which Cicero himself had lamented, when, in his attempts at translating the writings of Plato, and endowing his own language with the treasures of Greek thought, he found himself occasionally conquered and despairing. But Christianity did not feel his despair, nor accept the defeat; and when once the Latin tongue had been bold enough to translate the epistles of St. Paul, which contained the most difficult propositions and the boldest flights of

Christian metaphysics, there was nothing thenceforth that it could not attempt. The Church created certain words which were necessary to Christian theology—*spiritualis, carnalis, sensualis*—as designating states referring respectively to the soul, the flesh, or the senses; and also verbs expressive of certain ideas which had been unknown to the ancients, as, for instance, the verb *salvare*. Cicero himself having somewhere said that no word existed to render the Greek σωτήρ, to express the idea of a Saviour, therefore a Christian innovation was necessary to coin *salvator;* and thus *justificare, mortificare, jejunare,* and many new verbs were in time produced.

But this was not sufficient, and a deeper descent than any that the ancients had dared, into the delicacies of the human heart, was needed. Seneca had doubtless pushed his scrupulous analysis far; but Christianity transcended it, and discovered virtues in the deep recesses of feeling with which the ancients had never credited humanity. Christians were the first to use the term *compassio,* which had been unknown to the Romans, though it is true that they were unable sometimes to frame Latin words, and often confined themselves to a mere translation of the Greek, as in the case of *eleemosyna,* alms. They were bound to prosecute vigorously the work of creating resources before unknown to their language, and were not hindered by a fear of forming new expressions.

The Latin language had always preserved a concrete character; it had no love for abstract expressions, and no means of extracting them from its own resources. Thus the ancients expressed gratitude by *gratus animus,* and used for ingratitude the words *ingratus*

animus, but Christianity was bolder, and coined the word *ingratitudo*. Facilities appeared for the construction of many analogous terms, for multiplying and filling the Latin dictionary with names for abstract ideas, and thus appeared the words *sensualitas*, *gratiositas*, *dubietas*. But these expressions were not merely superfluous and adapted to encumber with vain redundancies a language which already sufficed for itself; they rendered what before had been expressed by a periphrasis, or, owing to the unwillingness of men to enounce anything that is not comprised in a single word, had not been expressed at all. Through their aid close reasonings and subtle distinctions could be sustained in Latin, now the language of Christianity, which in following the thorny disputes on Arianism had been obliged to mould itself after the supple delicacy of the Greek, and to acquire the same readiness in serving the intellect by providing it instantly with the word which it required to express a definite thought. And thus Latin gained the richness which had been peculiar to the Greek, and the power of creating words to meet its requirements.

But Christianity only achieved this revolution in the Latin tongue on condition of doing great violence to the beautiful idiom of Cicero and of Quintilian, in forcing upon it the unheard-of expressions which we have just noticed, and making *sensualitas*, *impassibilitas*, and the other words required by the œcumenical discussions, possible in a language formerly so exquisite. The Bible had commenced and been chiefly instrumental to the change by introducing into Latin the poetic wealth of the Hebrew on the one hand, and the philosophic wealth of Greek on the other. But in

this task the Bible and the Church itself had two auxiliaries, firstly in the Africans, and secondly in the populace, who, in the epoch of which we are treating, were semi-barbarians.

Let us mark the fact, which has been too little studied, of the invasion by the Africans of Latin, and especially of Christian, literature in the time which we are discussing. It has been often remarked that Latin literature made in some measure the tour of the Mediterranean; going forth from its cradle in Etruria and Magna Græcia, it crossed the Alps, and found in Gaul writers of the class of Cornelius Gallus, Trochius Pompeius, and their contemporaries. It then passed into Spain, to find there poets and historians, though of a less pure taste, and finally a little later into Africa, where it gave birth to the latest, but not least laborious generation of its children, who brought to the study of letters all the fire of their climate. Amongst the latter may be numbered Cornutus, the disciple of Seneca, who flourished in the time of Nero; Fronto, the tutor of Marcus Aurelius, the poet Nemesianus, and many others, and finally that Martianus Capella, whose learned allegory on the marriage of Philologia and Mercury we have already noticed. The speciality of African genius was, however, manifested by Apuleius, who showed strikingly, in his romance of the Golden Ass, a taste for obscure metaphors, archaic expressions, and daring hyperboles. He loaded his poetry with adornments proper to prose, and filled his prose with poetical turns, thus trampling remorselessly upon all the rules of Latin taste. It seemed in truth as if these writers of Africa had bound themselves to avenge the misfortunes of Hannibal upon the lan-

guage of his conquerors; and yet we must recognize amidst all the irregularities of their style a certain fire which smacked of the heat of their sun and of the sand of their deserts. And this was still more apparent when the African School had become Christian, and had produced the first and most illustrious of the Fathers, such as Tertullian, called always by St. Cyprian *the Master*, St. Cyprian himself, Arnobius, and above all St. Augustine.

Thus we see that Christian literature of the primitive ages was African by origin and in character, and Tertullian, the chief of the school, showed all the failings of the African genius. He was wanting in repose—a cardinal fault in the presence of the calmness which is generally the marked characteristic of the literary works of antiquity. His impetuous thought always snatched, not at the most accurate, but the most forcible expression. Had he a truth to present, he was certain to present not its most attractive but its most wounding side. Rash and aggressive, he defied the intellects which were to follow him; but still the darkness of his style only veiled its brilliance, and the pomp of his verbiage never served to cloak poverty of idea. He broke the ancient moulds only because they could no longer contain the fast-flowing lava. His energetic expressions, which seemed so many challenges, often obliged unwilling reason to own its defeat; and the man who argued so barbarously achieved in the end the highest triumph of human eloquence, in saying what he meant, rudely perhaps, but thoroughly and without compromise, after a method alike forcible and enduring. Thus on one occasion, in order to express the totality of the Roman civilization, he

coined the monstrous but pregnant word *Romanitas*, and again, in defining the Church, said in a jargon which assuredly no Roman would have owned, "*Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis et disciplinæ divinitate et spei fœdere.*" (The Church is a mighty body resulting from the consciousness of the same religion, from the divinity of the same discipline, from the bonds of the same hope.) Wishing again to pursue to the last details the decomposition of the human organization, he used the following strong expressions: *Cadit in originem terram, et cadaveris nomen, ex isto jam nomine peritura in nullum inde jam nomen et omnis vocabuli mortem*, and bequeathed to Bossuet the following immortal phrase: *Ce je ne sais quoi qui n'a de nom dans aucune langue.* These Africans, therefore, if barbarians, were at least gifted with eloquence, and if they broke down the edifice of polished Latinity which had been reared by the ancients, it was because they knew that they could build up a grander fabric from the ruins.

However, it was not the Africans alone who lent their aid to Christianity in the great work of destruction and reconstruction; for they only formed the vanguard of the advancing columns which now formed in truth the bulk of the Roman people, and which had been recruited from all the barbarous nations. From the remotest time, long before Goths or Vandals came in question, the mission of Rome began and accomplished itself day by day. When in the fifth century of its existence, for example, the slave Herdonius, with a multitude of his fellows, found himself master of the Capitol, the city was already in the power of the barbarians. Her population was composed of slaves, freedmen, and merce-

naries, strangers who took liberties with her language; and Scipio himself, the man whom Cicero placed at its golden age, said to the people from the tribune, with the audacity of a dauntless warrior:—"I see that you are all Numidians, Spaniards, and barbarians of other kinds, whom I brought hither with your hands bound behind your backs, freedmen but of yesterday, and voters of to-day." Thus the mass which was named the Roman people was but a great and increasing ingathering of barbarism, and it was also recruited by Christianity; for the religion which did not despise the mean and ignorant, which had been the first to approach them, opened widely its doors for their entrance, showed no repugnance at their coarseness, and permitted her Catacombs to be covered with inscriptions which bristled with barbarisms and solecisms: "*Quam stabilis tibi hæc vita est—Refrigero deus animo hominis—Irene da Cálda.*"

We see, then, that the language of the inscriptions of the Catacombs was identical with the language of that people whom we have before noticed as taking no heed of rules of euphony or of logic, and using a very different pronunciation from that of the chosen and elegant few who used the idiom of Cicero and of Horace. They even corrupted the popular Latin of the Psalms, and St. Augustine tells us that in the churches of Africa the clergy were unable to bring their congregation to chant *Super ipsum efflorebit sanctificatio mea.* They persisted in saying *floriet*, nor could all their Christian docility uproot the solecism. The same authority also tells us that in order to be understood by the people, it was necessary to say, "*Non est absconditum a te ossum meum,*" instead of "*os meum,*" and that

he preferred that rendering, as it was more essential to be understood than to use good Latin; and even St. Jerome, fond as he still was of the beautiful diction of the poets and the classic memories of Cicero and of Plautus, granted that the Scriptures ought to be in a simpler style, which would put them within the grasp of an assembly of the unlearned.

But it was in the domain of poetry especially that the intervention of the people became marked and fertile. Side by side with that learned versification which only the minority could justly appreciate, stood another poetry; and whilst the cultivated courtiers of Augustus were delighting in the dactyls and spondees which fell from the lips of Virgil, the Roman populace, too rude for such mental pleasures, possessed their own popular verses in those atellans and old Saturnine rhythms of which we now know so little. We are certain of but one peculiarity in the poetic taste of the ancient Romans, but that is a most interesting fact, namely, that they delighted in seeing their verses in rhyme. Of this traces appear in the works of Ennius, the poetical writings of Cicero, and even in the measures of Virgil, the hemistich often rhyming with the end of the verse; and we find it used with care and a certain affectation in the pentameters of Ovid, who seemed to take delight in bringing the consonant terminations of his lines into apposition, as if it were a certain method of extracting applause. So that this taste, which could be not entirely suppressed in the elaborate poetry of the Augustan age, seemed to proceed from the instincts of the people, who formed a species of poetry which was germane to the rude qualities of their language, as we find many rhyming couplets amongst the ancient relics

of the popular Latin melodies, for instance in the Roman war song,—

Mille, mille Sarmatas occidimus!
Mille, mille Persas quærimus!

Christianity, always considerate of popular tastes, had no need to outrage this one, and we find even in the poetic attempts which first fell from Christian hands that the rhyme was developed to a point which reminds us of modern habits. We will cite here, for the first time, a poem which is scarcely known, but which seems decisive on this point—a poem bearing the authorship of St. Cyprian, but which can hardly be his, though certainly dating from his era, which was also that of the persecutions. Its subject is the Resurrection from the Dead, and the first fourteen verses form a singular train of monorhymes:—

Qui mihi ruricolas optavi carmine musas,
Et vernis roseas titulari floribus auras,
Æstivasque graves maturavi messis aristas
Succidi tumidas autumni vitibus uvas, &c.

After fourteen lines which rhyme in *as*, follow five in *o*, and six in *is*, as if the Christian poet, seeking to impress their meaning upon his auditors, could find no method surer than this reiterated rhyme to lay hold of the memory and charm the imagination.

A little later the Christian Commodianus, who also lived during the persecutions, composed eighty chapters, *Adversus Gentium Deos*, which aspired to be in verse. But they were not equal to those which we have just quoted, and had nothing in common with the old heroic verse except the number of the syllables, which the author, in order to obtain the necessary dactyls and spondees, made long or short arbitrarily. The last

twenty-six lines formed a long succession upon a single rhyme,—

> Incolæ cœlorum futuri cum Deo Christo,
> Tenente principium, videnteque cuncta de cœlo,
> Simplicitas, bonitas habitet in corpore vestro.

Wretched lines intrinsically, but yet curious as showing the prominence given to the rhyme, which, from being a mere accessory to the poems of the age of Augustus, formed the sole object of the new poetry, in which the imitation of the old heroic verse was but a discredited tradition.

But St. Augustine entirely discarded the methods of the ancient poetic art and the harmony of the Latin metres, upon which he had formerly composed a treatise in five books; and for the sake of his flock, in order to fix in their minds the principles of the controversy against the Donatists which had so long troubled the African Church, composed a psalm *Contra Donatistas* of not less than two hundred and eighty-four verses, divided into twenty couplets of twelve verses each, accompanied by a refrain, and not including the epilogue. These verses were all composed of sixteen or seventeen syllables divided in the middle by a cæsura, and all ending with the same rhyme,—

> Omnes qui gaudetis de pace modo verum judicate.
> Abundantia peccatorum solet fratres conturbare.
> Propter hoc Dominus noster voluit nos præmonere,
> Comparans regnum cœlorum reticulo misso in mare.

From this we may see that all the artifices of the ancient poetry had disappeared; all that referred to quantity, dactyls, or spondees, was effaced, leaving only the two constituents of all modern popular poetry—the number of its syllables and rhyme.

Moreover, it is a striking fact that the plan of following the same rhyme for twenty, thirty, or forty verses, until it was fairly exhausted, was precisely the earliest method adopted for the chivalrous poems of the Middle Age, for the poems and romances of the Carlovingian period. In them also the same assonance returned over and over again, until the patience of both the orator and the audience was wearied, as if the human mind found a singular charm in the novel artifice which had taken the place of the canons of the ancient poetry. And to look closer, it appears as if the attractions of rhyme consisted in the expectation which it roused and satisfied, in the experience which it produced, and the memory which it recalled, in the return of an agreeable consonance, the reawakening of a pleasure once enjoyed when most pleasures pass by to return no more. Such was perhaps the psychological principle of that new art which was introduced with the popular element into the Latin tongue, and became the ruling canon of all modern versification.

These, therefore, were the achievements of Christianity, with the Bible for her instrument, with Africans, barbarians, and the populace, who were recruited from the latter, for her servants. Nothing less than this great transformation of the Latin language was needed in order to mould from it the classic tongue of the Middle Age, and to reunite the scattered elements of the ancient civilization.

For, in the first place, the Middle Age was a period of contemplation, full of that ascetic and cœnobitic life which was already flourishing on every hand, and which could only find adequate expression in a language which sparkled with the fires which had lightened

the anchorites of the East. And the Middle Age had to find in the idiom which it used a vehicle for that symbolism which had become its want; for no epoch has striven more to represent ideas by figures, and to discover in every being the mark of a divine thought; and thus throughout, in its poetry and its architecture, in its works by brush or by chisel, did the Middle Age preserve a character of allegory, and the chant of the Psalms alone could give to its Gothic cathedrals a worthy voice. Latin was the necessary language of the Liturgy, which formed the poetic song of the mediæval period.

And, secondly, the Middle Age was rich in the genius of speculation, in an activity of mind which never ceased to analyze and to distinguish. It produced those legions of logicians and controversialists whose dauntless subtlety never wearied in fathoming the regions of the intellect; and as to render their thoughts a supple language like that of the Greek metaphysic was required, so the mediæval Latin became the language of the schools.

In the third place, the Middle Age possessed the genius of action; it was pressed upon by the idea of law, so that the majority of its great wars began, so to speak, by lawsuits. It was filled with Pleadings for and against the priesthood, or the Empire, or divorce. Litigation lay at the root of all its armed quarrels; it was a juridical epoch, and produced the Canon Law; and as it required a language adapted to the rendering of all the subtleties and the satisfaction of all the needs of the jurisconsults, therefore the Latin of the Middle Age became the language of the law courts. And most of all, those ages represented the childhood of the

Christian nations; therefore their common infancy called for one language as the instrument of its education, and demanded that it should be simple, expressive, and familiar, capable of lending itself to the meagre intellects of the Saxons, Goths, and Franks, who then formed the bulk of the Christian world. For this reason the Church, with reason, preferred the idiom of the people to the idiom of the learned few, and prepared in advance a language which would be accessible to those sons of the barbarians who soon were to throng her schools.

Thus all the modern languages, one after another, were destined to gather energy and fertility from the ancient Latin; and not only those of them which have been styled Neo-Latin, such as Italian, Provençal, and Spanish, but the Teutonic dialects also were not free from the tutorship exercised by the language of the Romans. Long were they subject to its happy influence, and the English, which amongst all the languages of the North preserved the most of its effect, was also the tongue which acquired a peculiar clearness, energy, and popularity.

But the Latin which thus moulded our modern languages was not that of Cicero, nor even that of Virgil, deeply studied as these authors were in the Middle Age, but the Latin of the Church and of the Bible, the religious and popular idiom whose course we have been tracing. It was the Bible—the first book that the new languages essayed to translate, that was taken up by the French in the twelfth, by the Teutonic tongues in the eighth and ninth centuries—which, with its beautiful narrative, with the simplicity of its Genesis and its pictures of the infancy of the

human race, was found speaking the very language which was needed by the infant races who were about to enter upon civilized and intellectual life. Our fathers were accustomed to cover the volume of Holy Writ with gold and precious stones. They did more, for when a council assembled, the Scriptures were placed upon the altar in the midst of the conference, over which they were to preside, and whose deliberations they were to conduct. And when processions marched under the open sky, amid their ranks, as Alcuin tells us, the Bible was ever borne triumphantly in a golden shrine. Assuredly our ancestors were right when they covered it with gold and carried it in triumph, for the first of the books of antiquity is also the chief book of modern times; it is, in fact, the author of all our literature, for from its pages proceeded all the languages, and all the eloquence, poetry, and civilization of the later ages.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN ELOQUENCE.

THE Latin language perished by the dissolving process which sooner or later awaits every learned idiom, which begins by sapping its principles and ends by resolving it into a number of popular dialects. But the decaying language was in this case to subsist for the use of Western Christendom. We have glanced at the extraordinary transformation whereby the Latin tongue was adapted to its new destiny, and seen how the living forces of the Bible entered into the ancient idiom of Cicero to add to it breadth, the boldness of the Eastern symbolism, and the wealth of the Greek metaphysic; how the great work was seconded even by barbarous influences, by those African writers who remorselessly violated the ancient forms, as well as by the various crowd of foreigners who outraged the laws of language as unscrupulously as the frontiers of the Empire, who, in debasing the purity of the idiom, reduced it to their own rude level, and rendered it accessible to the multitude of Goths, Franks, and Saxons, whose speech it was one day destined to become. Thus was formed the Latin of the Church, a curious idiom which, though at once old and new, was frequently sublime in its very rudeness, which also possessed a native grace, ornaments, and great writers of its own, was sufficient

for all the requirements of the liturgy, of the schools, and of the feudal and canon law; popular enough to serve for all matters of business as well as for the teaching and education of the barbarians, and gifted with a fecundity which brought forth the whole modern family of the Latin languages.

Christian civilization, therefore, had found its proper tongue, and we now must examine its production of the three constituents of all literature—eloquence, history, and poetry. We will treat firstly of Christian eloquence. Antiquity had loved to excess the pleasures of speech, pleasures we may call them, for under its order eloquence was bound to charm the senses and not merely to satisfy the intellect. To the Greeks and Romans a speech was a spectacle, and the tribune a stage. As the Greek theatre was a species of temple, wherein the actor, clothed in majestic and ennobling costume, represented the gods and heroes of old, and was bound to preserve a kind of statuesque dignity, so was the Greek and Roman orator expected to manifest on the tribune, by the taste of his dress and his whole attitude and adornment of person, the correctness of a figure by Praxiteles or Phidias. His voice was raised and carefully sustained by the flute-player, who was his constant companion, whilst the exacting ear of his audience forbade his altering it to rise or fall beyond a certain number of tones selected to satisfy the musical craving of their fastidious and sensual organizations. Therefore, although it was customary to divide rhetoric into the five provinces of invention, disposition, elocution, action, and memory, Demosthenes, that great master of the art, declared that action comprised the whole matter, and that an audience was conquered at

once if the eye and ear were won. If such was the case with the sensual Greeks, equally must it have been so with the Romans, the most essentially materialistic race that has ever existed.

But the time came when the political interest, which had been the sustaining influence of these great displays, failed, and as the Greek stage had refused to produce any great tragedians when inspiration had departed from a conquered patriotism, so did eloquence wither on the disappearance of the mighty topics which had been provided by the centuries of liberty. At the time of which we are speaking only three roads were open to eloquence; the first of which was that afforded by the Bar, which had, under Valentinian, reconquered the right of public speaking. This was one of the benefits conferred by the Christian emperors, and the forums of the great cities, such as Milan, Rome, and Carthage, could show a certain number of orators famed for their skill in pleading. But the Bar was not the path to fortune. Martianus Capella, who was the boast of his contemporaries, and remarkable alike for the extent of his erudition and the suppleness of his style, confessed that the Bar of Carthage had never enriched him, and that he was dying of hunger whilst surrounded by applauding crowds at the tribunal of the proconsul.

The second employment open to eloquence lay in panegyric of the emperors, of their ministers and favourites, and even of the favourites of their ministers. But the talent was degraded by thus crouching at the feet of the degenerate and contemptible greatness of that period, and in danger of losing the nobility of heart, the *pectus quod disertos facit*, which provided its

healthiest inspiration. For what could be hoped for from men who could only praise Maximian, the colleague of Diocletian, by comparing him to Hercules, scorning a parallel with Alexander as far too weak; who, if Providence sent them a man of mark, could in the degradation which a course of miserable flatteries had brought upon their intellects and imaginations, find nothing new to say in praise of him; like Pacatus, who, in celebrating the merits of Theodosius, could only remark that Spain in giving him birth had excelled Delos, the cradle of Apollo, or Crete, the country of Jupiter.

It is elsewhere, then, that we must seek for the last remnants of the ancient eloquence, and, perhaps, it may be found in another form less known, but, perhaps, more in use amongst the ancients, namely, in the declamatory discourses pronounced by itinerant rhetoricians, who were in the habit of strolling from city to city with speeches prepared to serve for exordium or for peroration, or of extorting the applause of their audience by improvisations made at the request of a town, and with certain precautions. This was an ancient usage, and showed how devoted Greece had been to those pleasures of the ear for which her poetry alone was not sufficient; and we find men like Hippias and Gorgias, in the early days of Athenian history, making it their business to teach methods of proving the just or the unjust, and advertising their art in sustaining a thesis or maintaining a declamation as a means of drawing attention to their school.

Therefore, although liberty, and with her the serious motives of eloquence, had disappeared, this occupation still remained. We see, for instance, Dion Chrysostom,

the rhetorician, pursued by the hatred of the Emperor Domitian, taking refuge in an exile more remote than that of Ovid, in the town of Olbia on the shores of the Black Sea, inhabited partly by Greeks, partly by Scythians, and, on his arrival, being surrounded by a crowd of men who spoke a language which was barely Greek, inhabited the ruins, and were ceaselessly menaced by Scythian invasion, but who pressed round the orator who had appeared amongst them, led him to the temple of Jupiter, assembled in masses on the steps, and conjured him to address them until Dion was obliged to discuss some common subject, and mingle with his oration the praises of their native town.* And this passion, so strong in the East, was not less so in the West. Of this Africa, in the second and, perhaps, the third century, affords a notable instance in the person of Apuleius, who used to travel throughout the towns of Numidia and Mauritania with a collection of various discourses ready to be delivered upon emergency, which he called his "Florida." Once, on arriving at Carthage, he congratulated himself in his speech on the immense audience which had assembled to hear him, and begged them not to confound him with those miserable strolling orators who veiled the hand of a mendicant under the cloak of a philosopher. He went on to compare himself with the rhetorician Hippias; and although he was unable to make his garments, his wig, and his pot of oil with his own hands, "Still," said he, "I do profess to be able to turn the same pen to every description of poem, whether those whose cadence is marked by the lyre, or those which are recited by the wearers of the sock or the buskin; as

* Dionis Borysthenica, orat. 36.

well as satires, enigmas, stories of every class, discourses which men of eloquence would praise, and dialogues approved by philosophers, all in either Greek or Latin, with the same application and the same style." *

To such a pitch had the effrontery and, at the same time, the degradation of the art of speech been pushed that this man, finding out that he had flattered himself too grossly, excused himself on the plea that his self-praise was merely a device to fix the attention of the proconsul, with whose eulogium his oration was to terminate, and thus fell into a double obloquy from his vanity and his meanness.

If eloquence was thus lost, it mattered little whether lessons in rhetoric were still given in the schools, or if the youth of the time continually repeated the same exercises, composed the same harangues, or renewed the laments of Thetis or the death of Achilles, or those of Dido on the departure of Æneas. These themes, preserved throughout the times of barbarism, are to be found in the writings of Ennodius, who composed many of them, and later in those of Alcuin, who recommended and used them himself in tuition. But it was evident that they contained no intellectual vitality.

But Christianity could not suffer eloquence to perish. She more than any system was bound to hold it in honour, as representing the Word, the creative spirit of the universe, which had also redeemed and was one day to judge His work. That same divine eloquence was to be perpetuated in the Christian Church by means of preaching, and no form of outward respect was too honourable for its enshrinement. The ancients had

* Apuleius, Florida, lib. ii. initio.

given a truly magnificent pedestal to human eloquence. They had raised for it a tribune in the midst of the Agora or Forum; thence it might preside over those intelligent and passionate cities the conquest of which was the guerdon of victorious oratory. It was difficult to find a more honourable post for a mere human thing; but Christianity effected this by planting her eloquence, not on a tribune, but within her temples, side by side with her altars. The Church raised for it a pulpit, a second altar, as it were, hard by the sanctuary, and offered a spectacle, unseen by Paganism, of an oratory, prosaic in form and simple in matter, delivered in the pause of her mysteries. It was true that thereby the conditions of eloquence were changed; it ceased to be a means of enjoyment, and became a medium of instruction. Its end was no longer to enchain the senses, but to enlighten the mind and to touch the heart, and, therefore, action disappeared almost entirely from Christian oratory; for who could expect it from those bishops who sat motionless on their pontifical seats, in the depth of the apses, to address a multitude composed of paupers, slaves, and women, little skilled in the antique delicacies of Greek and Roman declamation? *

And, secondly, elocution was doomed to lose much of its importance. Disposition of the subject was to be neglected, for the Christian art was to be entirely devoted to invention and to a profound and exhaustive grasp of the subject-matter. But as art diminished so did inspiration increase; and as in the fifth century

* Eloquence became preaching, and the bishop became the orator, who spoke to fulfil a duty, no longer as a service rendered to the intellect, but as a call of charity.

inspiration had quitted rhetoric and left only a phantom of art, so, if art was absent, inspiration had returned to the eloquence of the Church, and method was soon to follow it, attracted sooner or later by the presence of the inspiring influence, as the sun on his rising calls all the harmonious voices of creation to salute him.

From the first appearance of a Christian school of eloquence we may trace in it an inherent and profound separation from the theories and methods of that of antiquity, and also an element of originality which touched mankind and was its true secret. St. Paul came into the midst of those intensely refined Greeks only to trample on the base resources of human oratory, to hold cheap the sublimities of speech, and to profess the knowledge of a single thing, Christ and Christ crucified. Yet we, like St. Jerome, cannot fail to perceive that the man who even thus appears uncultured had resources within himself of which his auditors of Areopagus were ignorant, and that his harsh, unexpected, and unpolished words struck home like thunderbolts. But as the Christian society was enlarged, the system of preaching was extended, and a want of organization was felt. A ministry of such scope and continuity soon found its laws, and St. Ambrose, in his work "De Officiis Ministrorum," founded, in some measure, on the "De Officiis" of Cicero, traced out the various functions of the priesthood, including that of preaching. Ambrose has been erroneously placed in the category of the Fathers who were estranged from art and inimical to literature, whereas he had so well preserved the tone of the masterpieces of antiquity upon which his mind had fed, that he sought for artistic rules in Holy Scripture itself, and laboured to prove, in

a letter written to a certain Justus, that it was possible to find throughout a respect shown to the three points considered by the old rhetoricians essential to a complete discourse, namely, a cause, a matter, and a conclusion. Moreover, his esteem for the canons and graces of the ancient eloquence appeared to some extent in the rules he laid down for the Christian orator. They were as follows:—"Let your discourse be correct, simple, clear, lucid, full of dignity and gravity, with no affectation of elegance, but tempered by a certain grace. What shall I say of the voice? It suffices, in my opinion, that it should be pure and distinct; for its harmony must depend rather upon nature than our own efforts. The pronunciation should be articulate and strong, free from the rude and coarse intonation of the country, without assuming the emphatic rhythm of the stage, but always preserving the accent of piety."* This shows that St. Ambrose was no mean authority, but a member still of the school which took into account not merely the thought and the expression of the orator, but also his gestures and the disposition of his drapery.

But the true founder of Christian rhetoric was St. Augustine, to whom the function appertained, especially in the capacity of his former profession as a rhetorician. This is evidenced by the fourth book of one of his most important treatises, "De Doctrina Christiana et de Catechizandis Rudibus." Having devoted the first three books to an exposition of the method and spirit in which the Scriptures ought to be studied, he showed in the fourth the proper manner of communicating to others the science which had

* St. Ambrose, De Officiis Ministrorum, lib. i. c. 22-25.

been mastered, and thus collected in his theory of Christian preaching all the precepts of a novel rhetoric: "And in the first place, he declared that he knew well the rhetoric of the schools, but did not propose to relate or to discredit its precepts—for as it had for its object persuasion of what was true and what was false, who would dare to affirm that truth should remain unarmed against falsehood?"* But he did innovate in adding, what the ancients had not dared to say, that eloquence could exist without rhetoric, and could be achieved by listening, by reading the works of eloquent authors, and exercising the mind in dictation and composition. On these conditions the subtleties of the schools could be dispensed with, and by this path a man could attain to the ineffable gift of persuasion and of eloquence.

But having made this just division between eloquence and rhetoric, St. Augustine suddenly returned to the precepts of the ancients, and selected from them, leaving aside whatever was unnecessary for the simplicity of the new era. He gave the principal share to invention, as befitted a Christian epoch in which the empire over mere form had been assured to ideas, and, adapting from the beautiful treatise of Cicero, "De Inventione," insisted that wisdom was the very foundation of eloquence, and of far surpassing value; for that whereas wisdom, without eloquence, had founded states, eloquence, deprived of wisdom, had more than once brought them to destruction. Applying these precepts, he continued, that though it was better that preachers should speak eloquently, it sufficed if they spoke words of wisdom, precepts admissible

* St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, lib. iv. c. 2.

alike in their liberality and their fitness; for had the Church been as severe as antiquity in matter of art, had she given the right of speech only to the eloquent, few indeed would have been entitled to spread her doctrines, few able to receive them, and thus the teaching of Christianity, instead of being the light and consolation of all, would have remained the pleasure and privilege but of a few. Great, therefore, and pregnant in consequences, was the fiat which opened the pulpit not only to the man who had been exercised during long years in oratorical struggles, like Demosthenes and Cicero, but to the humblest priest who had the faith which could inspire him, and the good sense which would keep him in the right track.

St. Augustine preserved, like Cicero, the distinction between the three parts of oratorical invention, for, said he, it is an eternal truth that a speaker is bound to convince, to please, and to touch. Nor can we wonder that he wished to retain for the Christian orator his mission of convincing, of stirring, and touching the rebellious will, nor especially that he permitted him to please; for we know the insight of St. Augustine, that finished expert in the mystery of the human heart; and we know also that the secret of pleasing is the secret by which souls are won. But even in this case he calls only for what is essential, declaring that if the key will really open, it matters little whether its substance be of gold, of lead, or of wood, only that it must be efficient to unlock the barriers of the heart to all the light of truth and the gentle evidence of the divine influence.

In elocution also he preserved, as being founded upon nature, a distinction of three styles—the simple,

the temperate, and the sublime. The subject of Christian oratory must ever be sublime, but it was not so with the style of the orator. A simple style, said Augustine, is the one which the auditor can listen to for the longest time; and more than once in his long career he remarked that admiration for a brilliant period sometimes extracted less applause from the audience than the pleasure of having clearly and easily grasped a difficult verity which a simple sentence had brought down to its level. Such were his recommendations in the matter of elocution. With regard to oratorical rhythm, he declared that although he aimed at preserving it without affectation in his own discourses, yet he really held it in slight esteem, and rejoiced at not finding it in the sacred books, delighting rather on the frank, uncultured, and highly spiritual beauties of Scripture, which was, as it were, released from these usages of a sensuous antiquity.

However, there was a certain danger in the contempt evinced by Augustine for the delicacies of style, some traces of the Decline, and of the vicious taste of his age. But however deficient he might be in his views upon elocution, and though his rules as to invention were but a repetition of the canons of the Ciceronian rhetoric, he recovered himself singularly when he entered into the hidden depths of the philosophy of eloquence, and promulgated the true mystery of the new school which he was about to found. This he effected in another work, which is interesting both from the circumstances which produced it, and as giving us an insight into the soul of its author. A deacon, named Deo-Gratias, who had been entrusted with the instruction of the catechumens, wrote him a

letter relating the disgust, trouble, and discouragement encountered in his difficult duty; and the saint endeavoured to raise his courage by representing, in masterly analysis, all the trials which must befall the man whose duty it was to expound the word to his brethren, and pointing at the method by which he might vanquish his difficulties, and triumph, sooner or later, over the repugnance shown by his own heart or by his hearers. The two secrets of the eloquence, which had its essence in the study of the human heart, were love towards the men who had to be instructed, and the love of that truth which was nothing less than God Himself. For St. Augustine found in charity the craving to communicate to our fellows the truth which has convinced ourselves, and in the impulse which causes us to open to others the hand which we deem to be filled with the stores of truth, beauty, and righteousness, a provocative to eloquence which had been unknown to the ancients: "For," said he, "like as a father delights in becoming childish with his child, and stammering out with it its first words—not that there is an intrinsic attraction in thus murmuring confused utterances, though it is a happiness looked for by all young fathers—so it should be a pleasure for us, as fathers of souls, to make ourselves little with the little ones, to murmur with them the first words of truth, and to imitate the bird in the gospel which gathers her young under her wings, and is only happy when she is warmed by their warmth, and can warm them by her own." And, in fact, no one could better understand than Augustine that mysterious sympathy between the speaker and his audience, by means of which the one enlightens, sustains, and guides the other, whilst both work at the same

time, and by the same effort, to discover and to glorify the same verity.

But if the love of humanity was one principle of the new kind of eloquence, there was also that real sacred love of truth, of the supreme ideal, which ought to fill the whole mind of the orator, never perhaps to be grasped in its full perfection, sometimes lost to view, but capable when seen from time to time of sustaining and quickening his zeal. And this influence, better known to Augustine perhaps than to any of the eloquent ones of classic time, is thus described by him:—"For my own part, my discourse generally displeases me, as I covet a better rendering, which I often seem to hold in my mind before I begin to express by myself in the sound of words; and so, when all my efforts remain inferior to my conception, I grieve at finding that my tongue is not sufficient for my heart. An idea flashes through my mind with the rapidity of lightning, but not so language, which is slow and tardy, and permits the thought to return into mystery whilst it is unfolding itself. Yet as the flying thought has left some fair traces imprinted upon the memory, which last long enough to lend themselves to the sluggishness of the syllables, upon them do we form the words that are named the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or any other tongue; for these same traces of the idea are neither Latin, Greek, Hebrew, nor of any other nation, but as the features are marked upon the face so is the idea in the mind. . . . Hence it is easy to conjecture the distance of the sounds which escape from the mouth from that first glimpse of thought. . . . But in our eager desire for the welfare of our hearts, we long to speak as we feel. . . . And because we do

not succeed we torment ourselves, and, as if our labour was useless, are devoured by discouragement, which withers our speech and renders it more impotent than it was when, from a feeling of futility, discouragement first came upon us."* We need not insist upon the merit of this, for eloquence was certainly renovated when not only the influences which could inspire it, but all the accompanying discouragements and melancholy were thus appreciated; and this was the method used by the chief Christian orators in reconstructing the theory of eloquence. It would now remain to us to observe the practical working of the new rules in their discourses, but this matter has already been treated by M. Villemain with a superiority which forbids a further analysis, and our subject simply demands an examination of the chief features of the changes gradually produced by the action of these rules, and the adaptation of eloquence from the shapes it had assumed in the classic period to the form which prevailed in the Middle Age.

The Christian eloquence of Greece seemed to have been born from the scoff hurled by Julian at Christianity, when in a moment of passionate contempt he bade the Galilæans go to study Luke and Matthew in their churches. It was then that Gregory of Nazianzum replied to him:—"I abandon to you everything else, riches, authority, birth, glory, and all the good things of this life, of which the memory passes like a dream, but I lay my hand upon eloquence and regret not the labours and journeyings over land and sea which it has cost me to acquire it."† The Christians

* St. Augustine, De Catechizandis Rudibus, cap. ii.
† St. Greg. Naz. Op. tit. i. p. 132, orat. iv.

were far from wishing to abandon their share in the empire of eloquence, and then in fact arose the great school in which, side by side with St. Gregory of Nyssa, flourished St. Basil and St. Chrysostom, whose conversion caused constant regret to the rhetorician Libanius, who lamented daily that he, Chrysostom, had been stolen from him to whom he had intended to bequeath his school; but from our point of view, Chrysostom was no great loser.

The Latins were not, like the Greeks, masters in the art of disposition, or gifted with their brilliancy and grace of elocution, nor ready with those comparisons which, though old enough, were always fresh drawn from the sea, the port, the theatre, and the palæstra. They had not the same pure instinct in the choice of expressions, and a certain barbarism was apparent in their subtleties and coarseness, as well as in the laboured refinement which was the offspring of bad taste. The fact was that the Latin Fathers did not address so polished an audience, but a variously mixed multitude; whereas the Greek Fathers at Antioch, Cæsarea, and Constantinople, had before them a select remnant of the ancient society. The congregation which crowded around the chair of the Bishop of Hippo was principally composed of fishermen and of peasants; and the multitudes of Milan even and Rome comprised a vast number of freedmen and mercenaries, who by the guttural sound of their voices recalled the forest from which they had sprung. Therefore other methods of conquest were necessary for these mingled populations upon whose rude natures the external graces of speech would have been wasted, and as the eloquence which moved them must be familiar, plain,

and pathetic, these three qualities generally formed the dominant characteristics of the oratory of the Latin Fathers.

But we see in the eloquence of St. Ambrose a more faithful adhesion to the traditions, and a kind of lingering perfume, as it were, derived from the ancient art. Whereas in his teaching he gave a large share to grace of form and even of costume; so also did his language contain a spice of the Attic honey. It is told how, when still an infant, as he was one day sleeping in his cradle in the court of the prætorium at Trèves, a swarm of bees settled upon his lips, as of old upon the lips of Plato. The tale gained credit with the growing fame of his eloquence; an eloquence which kept the people of Milan at once in perseverance and in duty, in firmness and in submission, whilst for two days the soldiery of the Empress Justina besieged the basilica, in order to make it over to the Arians; an eloquence which was of so winning a nature that mothers hid their daughters when St. Ambrose glorified virginity; and the power of which was able to arrest the guilty Theodosius upon the threshold of the sanctuary; its sweetness to ravish St. Augustine, still half Manichæan, still undecided, but more than half gained by the spells of so skilled a speaker.

But although the character of the oratory of St. Ambrose stood so high, we pass it over to come to that of St. Augustine, which filled a higher place in the opinion of posterity. It was true that the latter was less ornate, less antique in form, less moulded upon Greek models, and its author had not, like St. Ambrose, translated from their original Greek many of the writings of the Fathers. Augustine has left us about three

hundred and ninety-eight sermons, not including several treatises, which were preached before being written, and they show the characteristics which we have noticed as recommended by the saint himself, and which gave to preaching a novel form, by their familiar, simple, and attractive style. For, in fact, the discourse of the Bishop of Hippo was simply a discussion with his people, who often interrupted him, and to whom he replied. Often, also, he related his most private and domestic affairs, as, for instance, in two sermons he described to his audience the life in community which he led with his clergy; how their union was in imitation of the primitive community at Jerusalem; how none amongst them possessed any property of his own; and the bishop himself combatted any objection that might be raised against it. It was a common complaint at Hippo that the Church was poor because the bishop refused to receive either donations or legacies, and that nobody cared to offer more. To this Augustine replied that he had, in fact, refused heritages and legacies from certain fathers who had disinherited their children in order to enrich the Church: "For with what excuse could I, who, if both were living, would be bound to labour for their reconciliation, receive an inheritance which was in itself evidence of a passion which refused to pardon? But let a father who has nine children count Christ for a tenth, then I will accept the portion. When a father disinherits a son to enrich the Church, he must find some one else than Augustine to receive the legacy, or rather may God grant that he finds nobody." * Still, these minute explanations of even

* St. Augustine, De Vita Clericorum suorom, serm. 355.

his household expenses did not hinder his expounding to his people the hardest passages of Holy Writ, of initiating them into the mysteries of allegorical explanation, of relating the history of its persons and its events, of showing the figurative which underlay the apparent sense, and refuting the opposition made by the Manichæans between the Old and the New Testaments. He kept up also the struggle against Arianism, and, in the presence of his rude people, handled all the difficulties and objections, penetrated and dispersed the mists of controversy, and compressed into his rustic and simple sermons, with an admirable art, the momentous considerations and mighty views which were spread throughout those theological treatises which he had composed for the whole Christian Church. He succeeded in teaching his humble hearers how the Trinity was imaged in the triple unity of the memory, the intellect, and the will, and thus the idea which was exhaustively developed in his philosophical writings was laid in summary before fishermen and peasants. He led them into the domain of psychology, and the inner details of human thought, in asking, "Have you a memory? but if not, how do you retain the words which I speak to you?" "Have you an intellect? but if not, how do you comprehend what I say?" "Have you a will? but if not, how can you answer me?" And then, having caused them to disengage from the chaos of their coarse perceptions the three constituent faculties of the soul, he showed to them their co-existent unity and variety; and, little by little, that crowd understood, followed, and anticipated him, until he exclaimed in delight at their appreciation, "I say it sincerely to your charity, that

I feared to delight the subtle minds of the skilful, and to discourage the slow, but now I see that, by your application in listening and your promptness in understanding, you have not only grasped my words, but have forestalled them. I render thanks to God."*

It was indeed an achievement to elevate to the regions of metaphysic, and endow with intellectual power, those rough and uncultured minds, and, as Plato had inscribed on the door, "None but geometers enter here," it was a glorious contradiction to write, in the words of Christ, *Venite ad me omnes*—"All you who labour, who dig the earth, who fish in the sea, who carry burdens, or slowly and painfully construct the barks in which your brothers will dare the waves, all enter here, and I will explain to you not only the γνῶθι σεαυτὸν of Socrates, but the profoundest of mysteries, the Trinity." And this was the secret of that simple eloquence.

At other times he delighted in giving more polish to his discourse, and some place to the ancient art (though always using the same form of a familiar discussion), in unrolling before his hearers the greatest memories of Holy Writ in succession, and using also those literary reminiscences which would appeal to the minds of the small number of cultivated men to be found among his flock. As one instance of these discourses, we may cite the homily on prayer, spoken on the occasion of hearing the news of the capture of Rome by Alaric, one of the most curious, if not the most eloquent, of his sermons. We must mark the echoes awakened throughout the world, at Hippo as at Bethlehem, by that tremendous catastrophe, whilst

* St. Augustine, De Trinitate, serm. 52.

crowds of fugitives were landing for refuge upon every coast, who had purchased their bare lives by the abandonment of gold, silver, and treasure. Hearts began to quail before such disasters, and even the fishermen and peasants of Africa began to say, like Symmachus and his followers, that everything was collapsing in that Christian age, and that the new religion had ruined that greatness of Rome which the old divinities had guarded so well. St. Augustine, provoked by these complaints, answered with a mixture of irony, playfulness, and sternness, "You say, behold how all things are perishing in these Christian times. Why do you murmur? God has never promised that these things of earth should not perish, nor did Christ promise it. The Eternal One has promised eternal things. Is the city which gave us temporal birth still standing? Let us thank God and pray that, regenerated by the spirit, she may pass on with us to eternity. But if the city which gave us temporal life is no more, that city is standing which engendered us spiritually! . . . What city? The holy city, the faithful city, the city which has its pilgrimage upon earth, but its foundations in heaven. Christians, let not your hope perish, nor your charity be lost; gird your reins. Why do you fear if the empires of earth fail? The promise has been given you from on high that you should not perish with them, for their ruin has been predicted. And those who have promised eternity to the empires of this earth have but lived to flatter men. One of their poets makes Jupiter to speak and say to the Romans,—

'His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora pono;
Imperium sine fine dedi.'

"Truth has answered ill to these promises. That endless empire which thou givest them, O Jupiter, thou who hast never given them anything, is it in heaven or on earth? Doubtless on earth, but were it even in heaven, has it not been written that heaven and earth will pass away? If that which God has made is to depart, how much more quickly that which Romulus founded? Perhaps, if we had found fault with Virgil about these lines, he would have taken us aside and said, 'I know it as well as you do, but what could I say when bound to charm the ears of the Romans?' and yet I took the precaution of putting these words in the mouth of their Jupiter—'a false god could be but a lying oracle'—whilst in another place, speaking in my own name, I said—

'Non res Romanæ perituraque regna,

'for see I then affirmed that their empire would perish.'" It is plain that St. Augustine only quoted Virgil here in order to oppose the poet in one place to the poet in another, and thus to shake the extravagant respect still shown to him by the cultivated minority.

Knowing, moreover, that a certain number of his hearers lamented his severe treatment of the calamities of Rome, and murmured when he spoke of the recent events—for there were two parties in Africa, one Roman faction, and one opposed to Rome, to the latter of which St. Augustine stood in the relation of chief—he at once forestalled their objections: "I know that some say of me, if he would only say nothing about Rome. As if I came to insult others and not to move the Almighty, and to exhort you to the best of my power. God forbid that I should insult Rome.

Had we not many brothers therein, can we not still count many there? Has not a great part of the city of God which is sojourning on earth its place there? What can I say, then, when I do not wish to be silent, except that it is false that our Christ has lost Rome, and that she was better guarded by her gods of wood or stone? Do you speak of more precious ones? Then by her gods of iron, add to them those of silver and gold, and mark to whom learned men have committed the guardianship of Rome. How could those gods who failed to preserve their own images have saved your houses? Long ago did Alexandria lose her false deities, long ago did Constantinople give up hers, and nevertheless, reconstructed by a Christian emperor, she has increased and still increases. She stands and will stand as long as God has determined, for even to that Christian city we can promise no eternal existence."

This last fragment has much grandeur, whilst the opposition of the new destinies of Constantinople to those of the elder Rome, and the view of a mighty but perishable empire attached to the former city, shows the accuracy of the glance flung by St. Augustine down the stream of history, and would make us conclude that he saw in ages to come another horde of barbarians, led by a second Alaric, announcing to Constantinople that her day had arrived.

We may find many equally eloquent passages in the sermons of this saint, and entire fragments gleaming with beauties analogous to those which are so common in the writings of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Basil, of which the following extract from a sermon on the Resurrection may form an example :—

"You are sad at having carried a beloved one to his sepulchre, sad because suddenly you have ceased to hear his voice. He lived and is dead; he ate and eats no more; mingles no more in the joys and pleasures of the living. Do you weep, then, for the seed which you cast into the furrow? If a man was so utterly ignorant as to mourn for the grain which is brought into the field, placed in the earth, and buried beneath the broken clod; if he said to himself, 'Why then have they hidden this wheat which was gathered with such care, threshed, cleansed, and preserved in its granary? We beheld it, and its beauty caused us joy: but now it has vanished from our eyes!' Did he weep thus, would they not say to him, 'Be not afflicted, this hidden corn is truly no longer in the granary, no longer in our hands; but we will come again and visit this field, and you will then rejoice at beholding the richness of the crop standing in the furrows whose avidity you now deplore.' . . . These harvests may be seen year by year, but that of the human race will only be seen once at the end of the ages. . . . . In awaiting it, we, creatures as we are, unless we are dull, will speak of the resurrection. Sleep and awakening are daily occurrences; the moon disappears, and is renewed month by month. Why do the leaves of the trees go and come again? Behold it is winter, assuredly these withered leaves will bud forth again in spring. Will it be the first time, or did you see it last year? You have seen it. Autumn brought winter, spring brings summer. The year begins again in its appointed time, and do those men that are made in the image of God die to rise no more?" *

* St. Augustine, serm. 105, c. 7, et seq.

We will show in conclusion how St. Augustine could raise himself to that third degree of eloquence which was called the sublime; and how, after traversing the region of simple and familiar language, and using a style which was rich in ornament and condition, he had a method still by which he could assure himself of victory in the depths of the heart. For this purpose we will cite two facts, recounted by the saint himself by necessity, and in no way to vaunt his eloquence. From time immemorial there had existed at Cæsarea, in Mauritania, a custom called the Caterva, a small, but serious and bloody encounter, which took place yearly, and in which the inhabitants of the city were divided into two armed bands, fathers against sons, or brothers against brothers, and fought to the death for five or six days, until the town flowed with blood. No imperial edict had availed to uproot the hateful custom, which fact will not surprise those who recollect that mediæval Italy knew several similar usages which it required persevering efforts to repress. St. Augustine attempted to abolish a practice against which the edicts of emperors had been directed in vain; he harangued the people, and was deafened by their applause, but not thinking the victory gained as long as he merely heard applause, he spoke till tears began to flow, and then felt that he had conquered. In fact, he said, "I have spoken on it for eight years, and it is now eight years since the annual custom was celebrated." *

Another time a less dangerous custom, but one which it was less easy to uproot, was in question. At Hippo semi-pagan banquets had been instituted, which were called Lætitia, and were celebrated in the

* St. Aug. De Doctrin. Christian. lib. iv 24.

church. The inhabitants seemed little disposed to abandon the custom, when the ancient bishop, Valerius, called Augustine to share with him the burden of the episcopate and the ministry of the word, and charged him to attack the profane usage against which his own efforts had been useless. It was the occasion of another triumph for Augustine. As soon as it became known that he would preach on the subject, the townspeople agreed to pay no heed to his discourse. However, some came to hear him from curiosity. He spoke on it three times on three different days, and on that which saw him in possession of the field, he appeared so to speak in his full panoply, for he sent for all the books of Holy Scripture, read out the passage in the Gospel as to the Saviour casting the merchants out of the temple, that in the Exodus which told of the Jews adoring false gods, and lastly the passages of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, in which the Apostle condemned banqueting and drunkenness, and then, having returned the volumes to their guardian, "I began," he said, "to represent to them the peril which was common to the flock which had been committed to us and to ourselves who would have to render an account to the Prince of Pastors, and implored them by the sufferings of Christ, by the crown of thorns, His cross and His blood, that if they wished to destroy themselves they would at least have pity on us, and would consider the charity of their old and venerable bishop, Valerius, who had out of love for them imposed upon me the formidable task of preaching the word of truth. And it happened that whilst I reproached them thus the Master of Souls gave me inspiration according to the want and peril. My tears did not provoke theirs,

but whilst I spoke I own that, anticipated by their weeping, I was unable to restrain my own, and when we had wept in company, I finished my discourse with a firm hope of their conversion."*

These are worthy examples of the victories of speech, and humble and obscure as their subjects may have been, every spiritual conquest begins from humility and obscurity, and the eloquence which vanquished the inhabitants of Cæsarea and of Hippo was destined to conquer on wider battle-fields.

Christian orators of the school of St. Ambrose and of St. Augustine were numerous in the fourth and fifth centuries, and we need only point to St. Leo, so eloquent in unfolding the destinies of Christian Rome and in inviting St. Peter to take possession of that capital of every system of Paganism; St. Zeno of Verona, whose sermons are both interesting and instructive, being addressed to catechumens at the moment of their admission to baptism; St. Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, Gaudentius of Brescia, and Maximus of Turin. But that the discourses of St. Augustine with those of Gregory the Great remained as the principal and favourite models of the Christian oratory during the Middle Age is proved by the fact of the sermons of St. Cæsarius of Arles being confounded with those of Augustine himself, and by their still being placed in the appendices to the works of the latter, from the close resemblances of their minds and the close adherence of the disciple to the master. And in its turn the collection of the discourses of St. Cæsarius became the manual of all who were incapable of original preaching, and were moulded into the *homiliana* or

* Epist. xxix. ad Alypium.

homily-books which served as repertories for the numberless missioners who were sent to all the extremities of the world to win the barbarians to the faith.

The new era, therefore, was in possession of the eloquence which it wanted, which could be simple, to meet the requirements of St. Eloi, St. Gall, and St. Boniface in touching the souls of neophytes, who were still filled with the memories of their coarse Paganism and of the bloody deities of the Valhalla. It could be familiar and rustic in the mouths of the preachers of the Carlovingian period, who had to instruct and enlighten the swineherds and shepherds, for whom they so carefully procured the Sunday rest, that one day at least might be free for an advance in a knowledge of their religion. And it was bound to remain in sufficient loftiness and power to preserve the high thought of the Christian metaphysic, to render all its delicacies and subtle details, and impress them one after another upon intellects which seemed the least fitted to grasp them, and able also at a given moment to stir the blood of nations. We do not wonder, after our study of the divine marvels of eloquence, at the work achieved by it in the eighth and the ninth centuries, for it is harder to create societies than to guide and to arm them when made. And when we find Christian preaching able to rescue whole nations from Paganism, to bring them into new ways and uproot their most inveterate passions, it is hardly strange that it should have the power in later times of reconciling the Lombard cities and John of Vicenza on the field of Verona, or of driving with St. Bernard the whole assembly of Vézélay under the banner of the Cross.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

We have seen how exhausted eloquence was freshened at the springs of Christianity. History was, after eloquence, the chief occupation of the genius of the ancients. Amongst those nations who through their uncertainty of a future life sought for an immortality here on earth, sculptors and historians became powerful to give glory, to rescue heroes from the lapse of time, and to cause them to survive for eternity in living marble or on the ineffaceable page of history. But as history thus became, like sculpture, an art to the ancients, so also it possessed the characteristic of an art, seeking beauty rather than truth; aspiring rather to please than instruct mankind, and imitating the methods of poetry or of eloquence. Herodotus, in describing the strife between Asia and Greece, was ever mindful of Homer; the names of the Muses were conferred on his books, and they were read at the Olympic Games amidst the acclamations of assembled Greece. Thucydides witnessed the spectacle, and seeing the impossibility of competing with such a rival upon his own ground, inserted in his work on the Peloponnesian war thirty-nine harangues of his own composition, which continued to be the admiration of his contemporaries and the principal object of the study

and imitation of Demosthenes. And the same influence was at work amongst the Latin writers. Livy celebrated the epopee of Rome in his first books, and devoted the later ones to relating the chief instances of political eloquence; Sallust and Tacitus used the same licence; and all alike manipulated the events of the past with the freedom of Praxiteles or of Phidias, in chiselling the marble into form. History thus was especially poetical and oratorical in its nature; and it was not till later that it strove to become critical and gave rise to men like Dionysius of Halicarnassus, or Diodorus Siculus, who, though obscure in comparison with their predecessors, dived into the recesses of antiquity and the hidden causes which they had neglected, but always to be confronted by an insurmountable obstacle. For all the efforts of the old historians, confined as they were by a narrow spirit of nationality, issued, even while like Diodorus Siculus they aimed at a general view, in the apotheosis of a single people; they invariably appealed to secondary causes, whether political or military, and therefore Polybius, one of the most gifted with insight amongst them, gives us indeed an admirable idea of the warlike superiority of Rome, but goes no farther, and does not raise a corner of the veil which would open out the general advance of humanity. Ancient history had, in short, two defects; it did not love truth sufficiently, and carried away by national egotism, it failed to compass universal destinies.

Moreover, in the fifth century, history properly so called was no more; the "Scriptores rei Augustæ" had succeeded amidst the general decline to the biographer Suetonius, and the last historical pages of the Latin tongue were scarcely read. History only lived under

the pen of a soldier, Ammianus Marcellinus, who, being a pagan and a man of slender learning, could only follow the course of events with a troubled eye, but who wrote from the heart, and forced the Roman patriciate, who had summoned him to read his composition, to applaud the withering description of their vices. Such was the last echo of the plaudits of Olympia, the last imitation of the triumphs of the historians of old. Herodotus and Thucydides had as their successor an obscure and uncultured soldier, whose chief honour in that evil age lay in the possession of a shred of probity.

But history was of necessity to be regenerated by Christianity, for the new religion was historical as opposed to the religions of fable, and was impelled to re-establish and to rearrange history on those motives, in order to dissipate the myths which the nations had woven round their cradle, and which charmed them still; to refute the charge of novelty which was hurled every day against its children, by attaching the New to the Old Testament, and thus reascending with Moses to the origin of the world; and, lastly, to resume the broken links of human society and bring to light the providential designs of God, which were to issue not in the inevitable and imperishable superiority of a single nation, but in the common salvation of the whole human race. Thus the history that Christianity desired, unlike that favoured by antiquity, which erred in its leaning to what was beautiful, and in fixing itself in the narrow limits of nationality, aimed at being true, and also as far as possible universal, and these characteristics we shall find marked in the different forms taken by history with the Christian writers of the fifth century.

It is the fashion to throw doubt upon Christian antiquity, and to represent it as without books and monuments, and possessing only uncertain traditions. Doubtless Christianity is a religion of tradition, but it is also a religion of scripture. The Apostles and their disciples wrote; the bishops of the first three centuries followed their example, and each Church had its archives, which it could not always save from its persecutors. The acts of martyrs and canons of councils were the sources which supplied the ecclesiastical history at the period of which we are treating. At this time, then, we find history decomposed and reduced to its elements, but a reconstruction was imminent in the midst of the decay, and the separate constituents were but waiting for the breath which would quicken and reunite them. We find amongst distinct and differing writers three forms of historical work—firstly chronicles, which re-established the order of time; secondly, the acts of saints, which gave life to the foremost figures of the new era; thirdly, the first essays of that philosophy of history which unrolls the whole order of the divine economy, penetrates deeper than life itself, and arrives at the idea presiding over the succession of ages and of men, embracing and sustaining the totality of passing things, which would be unworthy of the attention given to following them, or the effort of memory in retaining them, was there not beyond the crowd of years which press upon us behind or before the idea of an invariable agency which impels and sustains, advances and causes to advance.

We find, firstly, chronicles, and this was a new fact. Doubtless the ancients had possessed some chronicles—as, for instance, the works of Eratosthenes and Apollo-

dorus, but they had found the task tardy and unsatisfactory; and the calculation of time and the art of verifying dates, as historical criticism was never a dominant feature of the genius of antiquity, had not been thoroughly cultivated. Certain efforts had been made to fix the time and place of particular events—those made, for instance, by Polybius, or to arrive at a particular study of certain causes, but they had never been extended to the universality of human destiny.

The early Christian apologists, Justin, Clement, and Tatius insisted at once, and not without sufficient motives, on the antiquity of Moses and the superiority of his wisdom to that of the sages and heroes of Greece. Julius Africanus wrote a chronography from the commencement of the world to the time of the Emperor Heliogabalus; St. Hippolytus, in his work upon Easter, gave a chronology down to the first year of Alexander Severus, and a paschal cycle for the celebration of the feast calculated for sixteen years. And the same idea occupied Eusebius, who undertook an universal history, which was translated and augmented by St. Jerome, and applied himself to placing side by side and harmonizing the profane and sacred chronologies. To effect this, he skilfully chose as a fixed point of departure the fifth year of the reign of Tiberius, which was the date of the advent of Christianity, and going back to the Olympiads and the Assyrian era, counted two thousand and forty-four years as the time back to Ninus. Then, by the aid of the sacred books, he also reckoned two thousand and forty-four years between the fifth year of the reign of Tiberius and the time of Abraham, and thus found points common to the two antiquities, and a possibility of agreement between

those two pasts which had seemed eternally estranged. Eusebius, or rather St. Jerome, who translated, corrected, and completed his work, carefully collected complete lists of the kings of Assyria, Egypt, Lydia, and the different cities of Greece; of kings, dictators, and emperors of Rome, as well as of the Jewish patriarchs, judges, and kings, and fixed accurately the length of their respective reigns. This first part of his book was merely introductory, and contained little besides names and numbers; but when he had, as it were, laid down the mathematical elements of history, and taken his vast domain into possession, the synchronical tables were unfolded, in which he marked by periods of ten years the succession of kings and chiefs in different nations, from Ninus and Abraham to Constantine. This, by the side of the shapeless attempts of antiquity, was a bold and able array indeed. It confronted, in the first place, the Assyrians and Hebrews with the kings of Sicyon and of Egypt, then gradually the picture was enlarged as the Argives, Macædonians, Athenians, Lydians, Persians, and lastly the Romans struggled forward into light and life. But the advent of the last was a signal for the retreat of the rest; and whereas at first his tables showed the Hebrews and Greeks side by side with the Romans, gradually the Greeks disappeared when Corinth lost her liberty, the Hebrews on the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, until Rome occupied the page alone, invading and devouring the space once held by other nations. And thus the rise of Christianity was entangled in the history of Rome, and amongst the annals of the latter were placed the story of the persecutions, of the martyrs, and of the rise and succession of heresies, for the

plan of Eusebius and St. Jerome did not neglect the history of human thought, but carefully placed side by side with the memories of kings and the mention of the events which marked the destinies of the nations, those of poets, philosophers, and all who devoted their mind or their blood to the service of humanity. So that the two great aims of history, verity and universality, were achieved as far as was possible in the first attempt at founding a science which all the Benedictine erudition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has not sufficed to complete.

An example of such brilliancy called forth imitators, and St. Jerome continued the chronicle of Eusebius from 325 to 328. Prosper of Aquitaine, a theologian and poet, took up the history until 444; and the Spanish bishop Idatius, in his retreat in the depths of Galicia, amidst barbarians, and at the world's extremity, brought it down to the year 469. The latter writer mingled with it in terse but moving terms his sad experience of that time of universal ruin, and tremblingly pointed to the last blows which were being dealt to the perishing empires, under which, for a moment, the Church also seemed to totter; and told, with the brevity as it were of a funeral hymn, how, after the barbarians had ravaged the provinces of Spain, and famine and pestilence had followed to complete the work, the wild beasts came forth from their dens, penetrated into the towns, and gaining ferocity from their feasts upon the unburied corpses, engaged the living whom they met in bloody and mortal combat.

The very precision of these chronicles gave them interest, but their dominant characteristics were brevity and dryness. They simply registered events, without

thinking of the tears which their narration would force from the eyes of men; and being written upon papyrus, which was destined to become so rare, they possessed a monumental character as if they had been written upon marble or upon iron. Yet the world had reached an epoch in which history, as known to the ancients, was impossible. No hand, then, was bold enough to wield the pen of Tacitus or of Livy; that of Prosper of Aquitaine or of Idatius must have seemed lighter, and there was no monastery so wanting in intelligent men as not to hold at least one monk who would write year by year of the events which had brought joy or mourning to the neighbourhood. It was done briefly, with a strange admixture of the particular griefs of the compiling monk and of the general sorrows of humanity. And thus we find, in some Frankish annals of the year 710, the entry, "Brother Martin is dead," the brother, probably, of the poor writer; whilst some years afterwards the great victory of Charles Martel over the Saracens, on the plains of Poitiers, was inscribed in the same annals with a similar terseness, as if in fact it was only by compressing itself that history could survive those difficult times, like the seed which always finds a breeze strong enough to carry it to the place which God has fixed.

Such, then, was the first form of history, of such nature the benefits which flowed from it. But it is certain that had the chronicle alone survived, all the beauty, all art and vitality of history would have been extinguished. This was not for the interest of Christianity, which had every reason for showing the living forces of humanity, the combat of the spirit with the flesh, the strife of the passions, and the ideal life in the

persons of her saints; and therefore her children laboured with respect and love to describe in full the career of those amongst them who had cast into the world the seed of an elevating eloquence or a faith-bearing death. For this reason the acts of martyrs early became a portion of the offices in their honour, and were read publicly upon their feast-days; and from the primitive times we find in the Roman Church, under the Popes St. Clement, St. Antherius, and St. Fabian, "notarii," who were charged to collect reports of the martyrs' acts, which they drew sometimes from their indictments purchased from the recorders. These were solid foundations for the Christian hagiography, as the indictments, which were really authentic, left no place for interpolation, and the brevity, simplicity, and sobriety of their details attested the good faith of their compilers. It is to this category that the acts of the martyr St. Perpetua, the letter of the Church of Lyons upon its martyrs, and the admirable letter from the Asian Church which related the death of St. Polycarp and the acts of St. Cyprian, respectively belonged. The latter was a legal document, which might well, from the absence of comment and of any expression of personal commiseration, have been the report of the pagan official attached to the tribunal of the proconsul. However, the fidelity with which the greatness of the martyrdom and the emotion and pity of the bystanders are depicted, point to a Christian hand, faithful and incorruptible, but neglecting no means of making his narration vivid, and giving to it the colour and beauty that one might have thought it had lost for ever. It was in the following terms that the editor of the *Acta* related the interrogation of St. Cyprian: "Galerius

Maximus, proconsul, says to the Bishop Cyprian, 'You are Thascius Cyprianus?' Cyprian answers, 'I am he.' Galerius Maximus replies, 'It is you who have made yourself bishop of those sacrilegiously-minded men?'—'It is I.' The proconsul says, 'The most sacred Emperors have commanded you to sacrifice.' The Bishop Cyprian answers, 'I will not do it.' Galerius Maximus says, 'Think of your safety!' The Bishop Cyprian responds, 'Do what you have been commanded, there is no room for deliberation in so just a cause.'"

Every one might suppose these words to have been written under the very dictation of their utterers; nothing was added to give scope to the feelings of their chronicler. Their freedom from abuse of the proconsul or the emperor, which might have been expected from a hagiographer of the barbarous epoch, points to the austere and dignified period of primitive Christendom. The judge pronounced sentence with unction, and the crowd of the brethren who surrounded the bishop exclaimed, "Let them behold us also with him," and he was then conducted to the place of execution with such a following of his deacons and the faithful as almost made his persecutors tremble. It was necessary that he should undergo his sentence, but they left him surrounded by those who had always looked upon him as a father, and now a saint. Putting off his tunic and dalmatic, he ordered that twenty-five pieces of gold should be given to his executioner. Then the brethren brought him the pieces of linen, and as he could not bandage his own eyes, this last office was performed by a priest and a sub-deacon, after which he suffered with the majestic dignity of a

prince surrounded by his people. When night came he was carried to his resting-place with lights and music and all the pomp of a triumph. Such was the energetic life of that ancient and powerful Church of Carthage which even in the third century had become formidable to Paganism.

Up to this period, then, we have absolute certainty, and these recitals were followed by others which offered the same guarantees, namely, the lives of certain men of ever illustrious name, such as St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Martin of Tours, which were written by their disciples, friends, and fellow-labourers, St. Paulinus, Possidius, and Sulpicius Severus. But to the epoch of the martyrs and the Fathers succeeded that of the anchorites. The distance of their desert retreats, the remoteness of the period, and the transmission of their histories from mouth to mouth left room for the introduction of an imaginative and poetical element. These stories of solitude fascinated the soul of St. Jerome, who undertook to collect them and so form a series of Christian pictures. It is not known whether his design was carried out, but three of these lives, namely, those of St. Paul, St. Hilarion, and Malchas, have come down to us. We will pause at the first to gain an idea of the tales which were peopling the Thebaid, were to be repeated throughout the East and West, and were destined to stir all souls which longed for peace and repose in self-sacrifice.

St. Jerome tells the wonderful story thus: That a young Christian of sixteen, living under his sister's roof in a town of the Lower Thebaid, during the reign and persecution of Valerian, and dreading the fanaticism of his pagan brother-in-law which threatened him daily,

determined on quitting the hospitable roof and finding a retreat in the mountains. After a long wandering he at last reached a spot wherein an almost inaccessible precipice offered a single opening into a somewhat spacious chamber hollowed in the rock and open to the sky; a vast palm-tree stretched its branches over the cavern and formed a roof, whilst a clear and refreshing stream flowed at the foot of the tree. Paul halted and took up his abode there, and lived—no surprising fact with his sobriety of manners, and considering the manners of the East—till the age of a hundred and thirteen years. As his last hour was approaching, the anchorite Antony, who was then ninety years of age, and had served God in the same desert for many long years, fell under the temptation of crediting himself with being probably the oldest and most perfect monk in the world. But the following night he was warned from on high to seek for an older and more perfect anchorite than himself, and the road which he was to take was indicated. So on the morrow he set forth; and the old man, already bent double with age, tottered painfully on his staff under the burning heat, until at the end of four days and four nights he fell exhausted at the entrance of a rock-hewn cave and cried so loudly that Paul, its inmate, heard him and appeared on the threshold. Paul, after some hesitation at breaking the impassable barrier which had up to that time guarded his solitude, brought the anchorite Antony into his home, and asked the first man whom he had seen for so long whether they still built roof by roof in the cities, whether the old empires subsisted, and the idolatrous altars still smoked. When Antony had satisfied him on all these points and had become

hungry, a raven alighted on the palm-tree bearing a loaf baked upon coals, and Paul said to Antony, "Behold the providence of God! Daily, until this day, I received half a loaf, but to-day Providence perceived that we should be two to break bread, and He has sent me an entire loaf!" Paul then informed Antony that he had expected his arrival, "for the hour of my departure from this world has arrived, and thou art only come to provide for my burial." And he asked him to wrap his body in the cloak which had been given him by St. Athanasius. Antony returned to his own cell to fetch the garment, saying to himself: "Wretch that I was, I have seen Elias; I have seen John in the desert; I have seen Paul in Paradise." But on returning to the abode of Paul with the garment of St. Athanasius, he found that the hermit had just expired, his lifeless corpse in the attitude of prayer, in which death had surprised him. Antony then took thought as to burying him; but how could he open the ground? He sat down in despair, resolved rather to die than resign the corpse as a prey to wild beasts. Then two lions appeared, and Antony took no more notice of them than if they had been doves. They dug a trench and then came to lick Antony's feet, and taking pity upon them he exclaimed, "O Lord, without whose will the leaf is not severed from the tree, nor does the sparrow fall to the earth, give these Thy creatures what Thou knowest to be good for them." Having then blessed the lions he dismissed them and departed, carrying with him the tunic of palm-fibre which Paul had made for himself, and which he wore from that time forth upon the days of great festival, such as Easter and Pentecost.

We need not wonder at the artlessness of the narrative, for even the great mind of St. Jerome could believe in the superiority over creation which manhood regained, in the re-establishment of the empire over every creature given to our first parents in that primitive order wherein whatever lived in the world was made to serve the wants of the world's masters, and in the reconciliation of all things through Christianity. We are now in the Middle Age, surrounded by the ideas and influences which gave to the men of that barbarous epoch their courage, their zeal, and their power, and the achievement of St. Paul in the desert was to be related of St. Gall, whom the legend makes to appease the bears of the Alps, or of St. Columba, who attracted about his steps the wild beasts of the Vosges, or of St. Francis of Assisi, who, as he crossed the plains of Umbria, was followed by the lambs and swallows as if they wished to gather up his words, whilst the wolves fled away from him. Truly, the conviction was necessary for the men who had to conquer nations which were fiercer than wolves, and we must feel less surprise at beholding the docility of the lions who came to dig the grave of the anchorite Paul than at seeing the most independent and implacable of men, accustomed to serve no master, to pardon no injury, to seek no counsel but that of the sword, learn at the voice of these monks and missioners, not only to obey, but to pardon.

Such was the commencement of a method peculiar to the Middle Age, and destined to form for the future the two parts of every historical work—on the one hand chronology, or the simple truth bare and dry in form; on the other, legend, containing the life, colour,

and movement of history, but often touched by the licence of poetry.

But, to analyze more deeply, if the ancients had been content with obtaining an approximative verity in facts and a certain beauty of colour and movement, the times of Christianity had a higher ambition, for they panted to know causes, with the longing which besets both great souls and those which are feeble but spiritual. For first causes are immaterial, and therefore the periods of materialism aim at nothing but a knowledge of facts, whilst the periods of spiritualism seek to arrive at causes which move in a higher sphere than facts, in the region of spirit. Nothing similar to this had been known to the ancients. Content with collecting facts and visible causes, they had never risen to the superior and invisible causes which rule the universe, and therefore their efforts in constructing a philosophy of history had been scanty. Doubtless the wont of referring every phenomenon to a superior principle had not entirely abandoned them, and Herodotus himself, in describing the fall of empires, showed a certain mysterious power, which he called τὸ θεῖον, which nourished a secret jealousy against everything which elevated itself, and sooner or later overthrew that earthly greatness which had risen too high; but this was the whole of his philosophy of history. His successors explained the succession of events even more insufficiently, and therefore Christianity had an effort to make, and then, as ever, great facts were needed to produce a potent inspiration. For surely no mighty event has ever happened in the world without producing an imperishable book, though not always one of the sort that might have been expected;

and thus in our opinion it was the Battle of Actium which inspired the "Æneid," and drew it like Venus from the waves in her shining beauty.

And now another event, the greatest since the day of Actium, had just happened in the world: Alaric had entered Rome with his barbarians, and had encamped for three days within its walls. It was the most formidable event ever chronicled in the annals of the world, yet there was no elegy ready to be poured forth over the watchfires kindled by the barbarians at the foot of the Capitol; no orator was there to protest, at least on the third day when Alaric had departed, that the danger had passed; there was no disciple of Symmachus or Macrobius, no successor of those pagan rhetoricians who had been so excellent in the craft of eloquence, to make the world echo with his ardent protestation. No, the cry wrung from humanity by that great and terrible spectacle was to proceed from Africa, and the book produced by the sack of Rome under Alaric was "The City of God," the first real effort to produce a philosophy of history. Nothing less than that mighty collapse was required to turn the attention of the world to the Supreme Hand which could shake it thus.

The Goths, on entering Rome, had set fire to the gardens of Sallust and a large portion of the city, but had halted in terror and respect—for they were Christians, although Arians—before the Basilica of the Apostles. They had respected the keepers of the sacred vessels, and the crowd of the faithful and of the unbelieving who had sought for life and liberty under the ægis of the sacred relics. Yet the humiliations of the Eternal City had unloosed the passions of the pagans,

and many of those who owed their safety to the tombs of Peter and Paul reproached Christianity with the ruin of Rome, and asked the Christians where their God was; why He had not protected them, but had suffered the good and the evil to be confounded; why He had not rescued the just from spoliation, death, and captivity, but had abandoned their very virgins to the mercy of the barbarians. These lamentations came in the mouths of a multitude of fugitives to trouble Augustine in the repose of Hippo, and to them in an inspired moment did he resolve to reply. He did this by pointing out to the pagans that the troubles of Rome were the necessary consequence of war, and how the intervention of Christianity was manifested in the power that had conquered the barbarians on the moment of their victory, and triumphed over their unshackled liberty. To the question as to why the same ills had befallen the righteous and the sinners, he answered that they were sent as a probation to the one, but as a punishment to the other, like mud and balm stirred by the same hand, the one of which exhales a fetid odour, the other an excellent perfume. Moreover, it mattered little to know who it was that suffered, but much to understand the manner in which the misfortune was borne—*non quis sed qualis*. For the Christian knew of no other evil but sin, and the captivity which did not dishonour Regulus could not disgrace a brow which had been marked with the character of Christ. Many, doubtless, had died, but who was to escape death? And when the resurrection day arrived the eye of God would discover those bodies which had remained unburied. He had consolation also for the outraged virgins, and then turning

upon the pagans, said, "What you really regret is, not that peace in which you could enjoy your temporal goods with sobriety, piety, and temperance, but a tranquillity which you laboured for at the cost of a profusion of unheard-of luxuries, and which tended to produce from the corruption of your manners evils worse than the utmost fury of your enemies."

After this triumphant invective against the friends and defenders of those false gods which the pagans of all times have ever regretted and redemanded, Augustine entered upon the discussion, and confuting those doctrines of the pagan world, and of Rome in particular, which accounted for the destinies of a state by the power of its deities, he undertook to prove that those gods could effect nothing, either for the present life or for that of eternity. The gods of Rome had spared her neither crimes nor misfortunes; plentiful were the examples they had given her of the first, for was not mythology filled with recitals of their scandalous doings, and had not the infamies of Olympus taken their place in its worship? Had not Rome followed these examples in the rape of the Sabines, the ruin of Alba, the fratricidal strife of the two orders, the civil wars, proscriptions, and frightful corruption of manners? The gods who had left Troy to perish could not have saved Rome? Had not she honoured them, indeed, when she was taken by the Gauls, humbled at the Caudine Forks, conquered at Cannæ? Sylla put to death more senators than the Goths had pillaged, and still the altars smoked with Arabian incense; the temples had their sacrifices, the games their delirious audience, and the blood of the citizens flowed at the very feet of those deities who were so

powerless to save them. He then maintained, upon the authority of Cicero, that Rome had never known the republican idea, which, according to the definition of the latter, was nothing else but the association of a people for the furtherance of justice, and the satisfactions of its legitimate wants.

We wonder at the boldness with which the African reconstructed the history of Rome in the light of its failures and chastisements; yet his enlightenment could not but show him also its value and its glory, and he explained the greatness of Rome by its place in the divine economy; for the true and supreme God, who had ordered not only the heaven and the earth, but the organs of the minutest insect, the plumage of the bird, and the flowers of the field, could not exclude the guidance of the nations and the destiny of empires from the laws of Providence. His justice shone forth in the government of the world, and especially in the career of Rome. The Romans of old only existed for glory, which they loved with a boundless attachment: "For it they wished to live; for it they did not hesitate to die, and by that all-absorbing passion they stifled all the rest. Finding it shameful to serve and glorious to rule, they strained to render their country free, and then to make her mistress of the world." Therefore God, desiring to found a mighty Empire in the West, that all the nations, being subject to one law, might end by forming a single city, having need of a people strong enough to vanquish the martial races of the West, selected the Romans, and thus recompensed their imperfect virtues by a terrestrial prize. "They had spurned their own interest for the public welfare, and provided for the safety of their

country with a mind which was free, and exempt from the crimes which their laws condemned, seeking by every method honour, power, and glory. Therefore God, who could not grant them eternal life, willed that they should be honoured by all nations; they subjected to their rule a vast concourse of nations; their glory, perpetuated by history and literature, filled the whole earth; they have no cause to complain of the divine justice, for they have received their reward."

The pagan deities could effect nothing for eternity, and every explanation of the things of time must have some reference to eternity. A summary of political and military events is not the sole function of history, but to collect ideas, and teach the revolutions of the human mind; and this St. Augustine bore in mind in his examination of the principles and transformations of Paganism. Following Varro in his poetical, civil, and physical theologies, he refuted all the attempts at saving the false gods by means of an allegorical interpretation which could not justify an obscene and sanguinary symbolism. Socrates, Plato, and the Neoplatonists, amongst the philosophers, had gained a glimpse of the truth, but had not glorified it; they had rehabilitated the plurality of gods, theurgy, and magic, whilst every system of error had found its proselytes amongst the disciples of the school of Alexandria, who, vanquished at last by a consciousness of their own impotence, had avowed with Porphyry that no sect had yet found the universal way of deliverance for the souls of men.

Having thus established the inefficiency of Paganism, he continued by unfolding the novel philosophy

imported into history by Christianity. God desires that His creatures should be intelligent, associated in community and good; but He foresees that some of them will be evil, which He does not effect but merely permits, as subserving alternately the well-being of the good and manifesting the beauty of the scheme of the universe, as in a poem, by contrast. Hence arose the two cities, "built by two principles of love—the city of earth by that self-love which tended to a scorn of God; the city of heaven by the divine love which issued in the abnegation of self;" both being so interlaced and confounded in the present life that the pilgrims of the heavenly state journeyed through the city of men. The city of God was represented by the patriarchs, the Jewish people, the righteous generally; but that of earth was forced to attach itself to things of earth. Cain built the first city, Babylon, and Romulus, like Cain a fratricide, built the second, Rome. Babylon was the first Rome, and Rome the second Babylon; the end of the one empire was confounded with the rise of the other. Both enjoyed a similar duration and the same power, and showed the same forgetfulness of God. St. Augustine summarized history in a synchronical table, at the head of which he placed the Assyrians, the Jews, and the kings of Sicyon and of Argos, and continued it to the advent of Christ and the progress of the Gospel. The city of God was still increasing, and had not finished at the fatal period of three hundred and sixty-five years which the pagans had assigned for its duration, a period that ended in 339, the very year in which the pagan temples had been closed at Carthage. The problem as to the end of man had divided the philosophers into two

hundred and eighty-eight sects, all of whom had looked for it in the present life, whilst Christianity placed it in a future existence. It proved the emptiness of earthly pleasures against the Epicureans, and confuted Stoicism through the insufficiency of human virtues. Man was born for society, but social justice can never be fully realized on earth; therefore a judgment was necessary which would ultimately sever the two cities and assign the one to ruin and the other to salvation; and although the Almighty had reserved the secret of its happening, yet we may compare the world's duration to that of a week, upon the sixth day of which it had already entered, and was thus approaching the eternal Sabbath, which would be a season of repose, brightened by intelligence and love.

This is a rapid and incomplete sketch of that astonishing but ill-arranged work which at first sight shocks us by its repetitions and omissions, which cost St. Augustine eighteen years of toil amidst the labours of his episcopate, and which, as its author composed the last twelve books after the first ten had passed from under his hand, was of necessity full of redundancies. Yet the toil of penetrating its apparent obscurities will be rewarded by finding a real arrangement and a wealth of insight and enlightenment. It shattered the pagan solution of the destinies of the world, imported philosophy into the realm of history by its novel doctrine, and sought for the secret of human affairs, not in the aberration of the passions, but in the mysteries of metaphysic, and the hard questions of Providence, of liberty, of prescience, and the natural end of things. It showed us ourselves in the sphere we had thought our own, no longer as

filling the world, but as small and hardly visible, absorbed by the Divinity which was ever enveloping and moulding His creatures, and taught mankind that, struggle as it might, it must be moved by God.

But great as was his achievement, St. Augustine was not content, and wished to undertake a completer treatise of universal history; and as he was unable to accomplish his design, he bequeathed it to the Spanish priest Orosius. We cannot stay to analyze his work, which gained celebrity, showed much talent, and an occasional flash of the true Spanish genius. But Paulus Orosius showed little of the prudent moderation and sustained firmness of his predecessor, and many were the illusions to which he succumbed. He maintained, for instance, that as Christianity extended, so would the empire of death diminish in the world; that the era of blood would close when the Gospel had mastered Europe; and prophesied an eternal duration to the brief peace which the Empire was then enjoying, in which the Goths and Vandals would consent to become the chief soldiers of Cæsar. However, his views were occasionally remarkable for their happy temerity, as when he spoke of the vocation of the barbarians to the Church, and, although more intensely Roman than St. Augustine, declared that if at the price of invasion and its attendant horrors, captivity, famine, and outrage, he could see the Burgundians, Huns, Alans, and Vandals saved for eternity, he would thank God that he had been suffered to live in those days. The Christian feeling thus prevailed over the Roman national sentiment in his desire to initiate the barbarians into the sacred mysteries in the midst of the fall of the Empire, an auspicious event if it

made a breach through which his brother might enter.

Several years passed, and in 455 Salvian wrote his work "De Gubernatione Dei." But circumstances had changed; there was no room then for illusion, for Rome had actually fallen, and the invincible barbarians had devoted seventeen days to the pillage of the world's capital. Who could speak of the eternity of the Empire then? The pagans, amidst their cries of terror and despair, asked where was the God of the Christians, and Salvian replied by showing the causes, natural and supernatural, of the ruin of Rome. He pointed to them in the corruptions of a society which was dying through the disorder of its institutions, and in the degradation of manners fostered by the Roman laws, insisting upon the superiority of the barbarians in this respect. "The Franks are perfidious but hospitable; the Alans are impure but sincere; the Saxons are cruel but upright; whereas we combine all their vices." He maintained that the Vandals had been sent into Africa to sweep away the filth with which the Romans had defiled it, and declared that their legislation was superior to that of Rome in not recognizing either prostitution or divorce; whilst he applauded the conduct of those conquered Romans who preferred becoming Germans to remaining subjects of the Empire, for Salvian had taken the last step and passed over to the side of the barbarians. Thus may we trace the progress of the philosophy of history; the new science which in the last years of the fifth century had lost none of its force. In the difficult time which was about to follow infinite popularity was to surround the name of Augustine. Charlemagne himself, in his

leisure moments, sought for lessons in the "City of God;" Alfred the Great translated the work of Paulus Orosius into Anglo-Saxon; and the mind of Dante had been so nourished that a canto of his "Purgatory" was simply a paraphrase of a chapter of the "City of God;" and Orosius had a place amongst the five or six authors who formed the companions of his solitude.

Thus the whole mediæval period was trained in the doctrines of these great men, and we must instance among the many historians who imitated them the celebrated German writer of the twelfth century, Otto of Freysingen, uncle of the great emperor, Frederic Barbarossa. That ancient bishop, although weighed down by the number of his years, was not content with writing the history of his own times, but extended his views to the composition of an universal history, and followed the scheme of St. Augustine in opposing the City of God to the City of Man. Writing with a thorough and somewhat severe freedom, he paused occasionally to vindicate his authority as uncle, and to warn his imperial kinsman in the words of the Psalmist —*Et nunc reges intelligite; erudimini qui judicatis terram.* And so the precursors of Bossuet were found, and so numerous were the links of the chain which bound his work to St. Augustine, that the connection never for an instant escaped out of sight.

These, then, formed the three constituents of history: the chronicle, which brought to it bare facts; legend, which afforded it colour and life; and philosophy, which formed its soul, gave to it a coherent explanation, and referred it ultimately to God as its First cause. Henceforth it was necessary to the production

of veritable history that the three elements should unite and grow beneath the fostering wing of the modern genius into a single organism capable of explaining and containing every fact. But to have prepared the minds of their successors was not the sole achievement of the men of whom we have treated, for they did more by preparing the way for events. We must insist upon this, for it is morally profitable to show to writers and to thinkers the point to which they may act, not only upon the sentiments, but on the events of the future. Two things might have occurred had the Christian writers of this time thought and written otherwise than they did. Augustine, Paulus Orosius, and Salvian might have taken the side of Rome absolutely as against the barbarians, or have ranged themselves in the ranks of the latter without pity for Rome. Had they taken the course which seemed the most natural one, and abandoned themselves to that despair which is so common in our day, and in which certain minds seem to find some excellence, they would by their example have so discouraged the Church of the West that the entire Christian population of its component nations would have declared an unreserved hostility against the barbarians. They would have made the seeming enmity of the latter to God and the human race a reality, and have brought upon Rome, upon the Christian civilization, and upon humanity, a series of incalculable calamities. On the other hand, had they taken up the second position, and given a precipitate adhesion to the cause of the barbarians, they would have made themselves judges in the place of God, condemned Rome as the second Babylon to an eternal ruin, and brought such a chastisement upon

her that hardly one stone would have remained upon another; and thus they would have lent their aid to elimination of the central point of the world, displaced the rally-point of Christian life in the Middle Age, and disturbed the whole economy of the succeeding ages. They would have quenched the spark of light of which Rome was the sole preserver up to the time of Charlemagne, and consequently would have deprived humanity of the civilizing influences which had been thus treasured up for its benefit. But with a happier inspiration they evinced the courage, branded by those who knew it not with the name of optimism, which enabled them to regard those difficult and menacing times with a firm and calm glance, and could wisely distinguish the real property of the past amidst the trembling destinies of the future. Without committing themselves to the side of the barbarians, they met them half way, and applauded the Goths for the clemency which had spared the Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul; nor shall we find a single Christian writer of the period who did not celebrate this generous action of a conquering and success-maddened people. By this means they conciliated the barbarians, half won from that moment, and thrust their swords back into the scabbards, so that every chief amongst them envied the glory of Alaric, and respected the altars which had been blessed by the aged bishop or priest. And as defeat was thus made more tolerable to the vanquished, so did courageous zeal reinspire the Christians, who perceived that after all their conquerors were not devourers of men, and that as the work of their conversion might be undertaken and accomplished, a lasting spirit of despair was not neces-

sary. They might enter as pilgrims into the city of God, and the wild-beast skin which covered the barbarian might vest a future citizen of the Eternal State.

Moreover, in taking the part of Rome in a certain measure, and recalling its virtues and glory, they showed that the city was still worthy of respect, and that if she had merited a punishment for her crimes, God had but stricken in order to warn, and that the time for her consolation had arrived. They so worked upon the barbarian mind by their pictures of her ancient might that they produced the result described by Jornandes, and caused Rome to reign through the imagination, if not by force of arms; and well has she shown that her new method of empire was a thousandfold more powerful than that of old; for she entered thereby on her novel destiny, and founded that spiritual sovereignty of which she was always to remain the centre. Those who had undertaken her defence against the weapons and the invectives of the barbarians formed, as it were, a circle round the tomb of St. Peter, and, extolling it as the spot selected by God for the centre of enlightenment, compelled the barbarians who had encamped around the Capitol firstly to respect and then to submit; and thus arose the mediæval economy wherein antiquity, regenerated in Rome, enlightened and disciplined the barbarism of a new era. Such was one of the greatest examples of the influence of literature, not merely over minds, but over events; such the nature of one of those glorious delegations of power made occasionally by Providence to the genius of mankind.

CHAPTER VII.

POETRY.

In commencing our study of the Christian literature with its prose, and placing eloquence and history before its epopee, we have reversed, in some measure, the commonly established order. Had it been our object to examine an ancient literature such as that of the Greeks, we should have found that for many ages poetry alone was produced, and that it was only gradually that prose emerged from its golden mists, for the civilization of Paganism was cradled amidst fables. The nations then, like children, understood no language but that of the imagination, and the lapse of seven ages, from the time of Homer to that of Herodotus, was necessary in order that reason might gain courage to address mankind in its natural language.

Christianity, on the contrary, could not suffer its origin to be veiled by fiction, for it proposed facts and dogmas which were defined verities, to the reason and not merely to the imagination of the nations; and therefore during three centuries it spoke to them in prose and prose alone. It was at the end of that period that Christian poetry took its first and feeble rise. And yet nothing seemed wanting to inspire it in the greatness of passing events and the revolution which was sweeping over the world, or in the emotions

of the soul and the inward agony which was upheaving the depths of the conscience; but the spectacle was still too near at hand, and, as M. St. Marc Girardin has admirably expressed it, the truth of that era was too powerful to create poets, and could still only make martyrs; for an interval must ever lie between deep emotion and poetical inspiration; and we shall find that those silent ages were not too long for their work of ripening the rich harvest of Christian art.

We may pass by the small band of unknown poets who wrote at the time of the persecutions, and omit several compositions, attributed sometimes to Tertullian, and at others to St. Cyprian, but which were certainly of contemporary date with those great men. The peace of the Church was like a day-dawn, calling forth harmonies from every side, and Christianity seemed as she assumed in the person of Constantine the crown of the Cæsars to inherit also, so numerous were the Christian versifiers, the laurel wreath of Virgil. Their great number already calls for a division, and we, adopting the great classification of the ancients, may divide them into epic and lyric poets, for the Church had not at that time reopened the theatre.

Thus the two orders in poetry were already existent, and to the epic order we may assign, as did the ancients, the didactic poetry, such as the instructions given by the poet Commodianus against Paganism, or the poem against the Semi-pelagians which was written by Prosper of Aquitaine, and has since become so famous through its imitation by Louis Racine. But the principal tendency and the chief effort of Christian poetry from that era was to reduce the narratives of its religion to its own laws. Its dominant idea was to lend to the

Biblical traditions, which were the very foundations of the faith, the brilliancy of the Latin versification and some of the ornament which had been borrowed from the pagan authors. We see some poets, like Dracontius, St. Hilary of Arles, and Marius Victor, turning their minds to the earliest narrations of the Bible, to the scenes of Genesis *and the lovable simplicity of an infant world;* whilst others, as Juvencus and Sedulius, confining themselves to the evangelical history, laboured solely towards the reproduction, with harmony and accuracy and a certain amount of poetical adornment, of the text of the Gospel. However, the common characteristic of all these poets and translators of Holy Scripture into verse was a scrupulous and exact fidelity, and thence followed on the one hand a remarkable gravity and sobriety, a renunciation of that wealth of epithet and hyperbole which had formerly roused the emotions, so that even the sufferings of the Saviour, the ingratitude of the Jews, and the coldness of the Disciples, extracted no bitter epithet which had not already fallen from the sacred writer himself, and the general effect of the poems presented a certain solemnity and grandeur. But, on the other hand, it must be confessed that their sobriety often verged upon dryness; that they contained neither episodes nor descriptions, and hardly any paraphrases or commentaries, but simply the text itself, adapted to the hexameter measure, which was kept as close as was possible to the ancient form.

We can understand the motives which inspired these labourers by the explanations given by the authors themselves; for Sedulius, one of the most popular amongst them, has accounted in his dedicatory epistle to the Bishop Macedonius, for the influence which

guided his pen. He declared that he desired to devote to the service of the faith those studies which had been commenced with a different aim, and to consecrate to the truth the predestined instruments of vanity. "For," said he, "I know that many spirits will not accept the truth, nor willingly retain it, unless it be presented to them beneath the flowers of poetry; and I thought that people of such a disposition should not be repelled, but should be treated in accordance with their natural wants, in order that each man might become the voluntary captive of God according to his own genius!"* Light is thrown upon this by our previous knowledge of the Roman schools: the whole order of instruction was founded by the ancients—and this was most wisely preserved during the Middle Age—upon the exercise of the memory and the study of the poets. In Greece it was commenced by Homer, and in the West by Virgil; but under the auspices of Virgil, the Christians and the pagans of the fifth century learned by heart, and imprinted upon their recollection, all the ideas, doctrines, and images of Paganism, and it was against these that the early Christian poets strained every nerve. They wrote under the idea of polemical controversy, and made it their aim to dethrone the false gods from the envied place which had been given them in the memory and the hearts of children, and to enthrone thereon a worthier deity. For this reason they laboured to retain the pure and classic forms of Virgil, whilst they cast their novel ideas into the ancient mould, at the risk of beholding them burst through the form into which they had been compressed, and finally destroy the mould which had received them.

* Sedulius, Epist. dedicat. ad Macedonium.

Some of them went so far as to reduce the Gospel into cantos, and to make, like Faltonia Proba, a history of the Saviour in three hundred hexameters, each composed of two or more fragments of Virgil. But Sedulius and Juvencus, without proceeding to this extremity, aimed at preserving the language of antiquity, in which they succeeded in many respects, and were not inferior to any of the pagan poets of their day. We recognize in their writings a constant imitation of Virgil, of Ovid, and of Lucretius. It is, doubtless, often without meaning, as for instance where the verse in which Virgil represents Cassandra as raising her eyes in supplication when her hands were bound, is made to express the action of the good thief upon the cross in turning his eyes to Christ because his hands were nailed to the wood of torture. More than once is this copy of antiquity wanting in taste and accuracy; but still the poets who used it attained their object, and obtained from it the result they desired, and another of which they had never dreamed. They caused the verities of Christianity under this poetic form to penetrate more easily and more thoroughly the cultured classes of the Roman world; this was their object, and to this they attained. But that which they had never desired, and of which they had never dreamed, but which they nevertheless effected in a marvellous manner, was the laying hold later of a society which was no longer Roman, which although Christian was barbarous, and by the means of their Christian poetry penetrating it with the taste, and to a certain point with the genius and traditions, of the literature of antiquity. In fact, Sedulius and Juvencus, those two Virgilian Christians so to speak, were destined to become the favourite instructors

of the youth of the barbarous ages; their evangelic poems were to be placed in the hands of all, and to begin the education of infancy. Having thus gathered disciples, they also found imitators, not only in the Latin but also in all the new languages which were being framed upon Latin models; and it was after their example that the Anglo-Saxon Cædmon, that priest who one day by divine grace found himself inspired and became a poet, undertook to sing of the origin of the world and the fall of the first man; whilst later, about the time of Charlemagne, the monk Ottfried did not shrink from writing a great poem on the Harmony of the Gospels, and was the first who forced the glorious language of the Franks to resound with the praises of Christianity.

Yet these frequent and long-sustained efforts did not result in moulding the Christian epopee into the form which might have seemed proper to it. For on seeing Juvencus and Sedulius labouring, even in the fifth century, to sing of the birth, the life, and the sufferings of Christ; on seeing the whole Christian world filled with the same idea, and every art, from painting to architecture, occupied in reproducing it under a thousand forms; and, lastly, on beholding the entire manhood of the Church rushing, at the cry of the crusades, to deliver the sepulchre of the Saviour, does it not seem that the whole poetic effort must have tended to realize the type of which it dreamed, and to treat in glorious and immortal narrative of the advent and the mission of Christ? Yet it is this that Christian poetry will never achieve. Doubtless it is true that poetry calls for the intervention of the Divinity, but not of the Divinity alone, for it is especially necessary to it that

humanity should fill the scene. Poetry attaches itself in preference to that which is human, because she finds therein elements of passion, of nobility, of pathos, of changefulness, and, consequently, a plenitude of diverse and contrary emotions. And therefore the Christian poetry found its principal resources in the events, the temporal, warlike, political, and military developments of Christendom. The conquests of Charlemagne, chivalry as symbolized under the myth of the Round Table, and the recovery of the Holy Places, brought forth the chivalric romances and resulted in the epopee of Tasso. The discovery by Christians of an unbelieving world was to inspire the admirable author of the "Lusiades." Thus it is always from humanity that even Christian poetry seeks its principal inspiration; though it seeks also to bury itself in the depths of the faith, and to return, as far as possible, to that divine epopee which has for its three points the Fall, Redemption, and Judgment. Yet even when it has reached that subject which has never ceased to torment mankind, it succeeds only in grasping the two human extremities, for the Divine mean still escapes it. We see Milton, indeed, after the lapse of many ages, when the Bible itself had felt the influence of the Protestant controversy, using the boldest interpretation, that he might turn the first pages of Genesis into a poem; but the hero that he took was a mortal man capable of supreme misery—the man who from the beginning to the end of things is ever disquieting us by his weakness and reassuring us by the impulse which bears him back to God. Dante, likewise, causes us to explore the three kingdoms of hell, of purgatory, and of paradise; but he peopled them with men of

like nature to himself, and it was from their conversation that he evoked the floods of poetry with which his century was inundated. On the other hand, when Christian poetry sought to touch the mysteries of redemption—the knot of the divine epopee—it shrunk back; and however great might be the genius of those who ventured on it, it found itself always arrested, floating vaguely amidst its own conceptions; and whether it brought to the task the piety which breathed through the writings in which Hroswitha celebrated the infancy of the Saviour, or was evinced by Gerson in his charming poem, "Josephina," which was devoted to the same subject; or through the learned and elegant methods of the Revival, as employed by Sannazar, in his work "De Partu Virginis," or Vida in his "Christiad;" or, lastly, was strong in the boldness of the modern spirit, in the charms of a dreamy imagination, and of a richly endowed mind, like that of Klopstock, it still has always failed. And the reason is, that the Christian world has still too much faith, and that the august figure of Christ still inspires so much respect that the hands which approach it tremble. Painters have traced that Form because there was no authentic image; but poets were unable to lend to it speech and action, for they were crushed by the reality of the Gospel. Providence has willed that nothing akin to poetry or to fiction should envelop that fundamental dogma upon which the whole economy of the world's civilization is reposing.

But side by side with Christian hymnody, which surmounted with so much labour the difficulties of its origin, stood that lyric poetry, the free outpouring of the soul, which was only moulded into verse that it

might be established and perpetuated. The production of a lyric poetry was predestined from the earliest times of Christianity. St. Paul himself exhorted the faithful to sing hymns of praise, and we can mark traces of them in the letter from Pliny to Trajan, or that in which St. Justin described the liturgy used by the Christians of his day. Again, an ancient legend prevailed in the East to the effect that St. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, had beheld in vision the heaven opened, and had heard the angels singing in double choir the praises of the Holy Trinity: he had therefore introduced the double chant into the Churches of the East. It was a graceful and majestic idea that caused the music of the Church to originate in heaven itself.

But although the East had adopted the Christian hymnody from the beginning of the fifth century, the same was not the case in the West. It was in the time of St. Ambrose, and owing to a remarkable circumstance in his life, that church music was definitively adopted in Italy. St. Augustine relates the fact thus:—the Empress Justina was persecuting St. Ambrose, and the people of Milan watched day and night around their bishop in order to protect him from her fury. And he, touched by their fidelity and the long nights passed in guarding his person, bethought himself of beguiling their interminable vigils by an introduction into his Church of the Eastern method of chanting the psalms and hymns. It spread gradually thence over the whole of the Church, and St. Augustine does not neglect to convey to us the profound impression which those sacred songs exercised over him; for he says, in speaking of the day of his baptism, "Thy hymns and canticles, O my God, and the sweet

chant of Thy Church stirred and penetrated my being. These voices streamed upon my ears and caused the truth to flow into my heart; the emotions gushed up therein; lastly my tears poured forth, and I rejoiced in them."* However, this man, who had such a profound appreciation of music, perhaps from its very intensity felt doubts as to its fitness, and asked himself whether the pleasure given by the music did not injure the meditation of the soul, and whether he did not give too much attention to those harmonious modulations which were so charming to the ear. Happily, however, the scruples of Augustine did not survive in his own mind nor in the Church, and so the cause of religious music was gained.

St. Ambrose not only introduced the chant, but was himself the composer of hymns to be sung in his own Church. Numbers of these have been collected under his name, which were more probably the work of his disciples, or of later times, but which were composed in conformity to his spirit and the rules which he had laid down. Twelve only can, with certainty, be attributed to him; but they are full of grace and beauty, thoroughly Roman in the gravity of their character, and of a certain peculiar manliness amidst the tender effusions of Christian piety, as if still animated by the tone of primitive times. We may cite the following as an instance:—

Deus creator omnium
Polique rector, vestiens
Diem decoro lumine,
Noctem soporis gratiâ.

St. Ambrose himself acknowledged the authorship of

* St. Augustine, Confess. lib. ix. c. 6.

this. Whilst its language was ancient, its versification had something of the modern form, in that little strophe of four iambic verses of eight syllables, which lends itself so easily to replacing the quantity by the accent, and thus paving a way for the rhyme, which, as we have seen, was introduced early into Christian versification, was used by St. Augustine himself in his psalm against the Donatists, and recurred for twenty-four verses, every two of which rhymed, in the hymn addressed by Pope Damasus to St. Agatha. Thus the sequence of the Middle Age had already appeared, nearly all of which are thus cut into strophes of four verses, each containing eight syllables, with this difference, that in the mediæval poetry quantity was replaced by the rhyme, which was to afford to the ear the satisfaction which the ancient prosody would henceforth be unable to offer. It was a strange fact that it was only upon the condition of breaking loose once and for ever from the ancient forms, that the poetry of Christianity was at last to attain that liberty without which it must lack inspiration, which was to endow it with the abundant wealth and strength which it possessed in the thirteenth century, and, finally, with the majesty of the *Dies Iræ* and the inexpressible grace of the *Stabat Mater*.

Such, then, was the general aspect of Christian poetry in its commencement. We must now demand whether the century which has shown us so many men of eloquence did not also produce some few who were really touched by the beams of poetry; whether we are only to observe in them the obscure beginning of that which was destined to become illustrious, or if they did not already manifest some inspiration? We may

answer the question by separating from the mass two men, St. Paulinus and Prudentius, who deserve to be placed side by side and to be known by us.

If poetry could be found anywhere, it was surely in those disquieted souls which came for refuge to the Christian life, bruised by the long resistance of the flesh and the passions. It was an age of tormented consciences; feeble minds were hesitating, stronger natures were deciding, and found in the shock inspiration, eloquence, and poetry. Such was the state of Ambrose, Augustine, and the many others whom we have seen by their side. Those great souls had the courage to break with the past, and in the effort they found that which has always been its recompense, the strength which comes from on high to aid the will. That strength was, to some, the courage to act, to others the courage to speak; it came to some as eloquence, to certain as philosophy, and to others, lastly, in the shape of poetry.

Paulinus, who bore the surnames Pontius Meropius, came of a great Roman family, of senatorial rank. He was born in the environs of Bordeaux, and received his first education at the schools of Gaul, which then possessed the most illustrious masters in the West. The poet Ausonius had been the first tutor of Paulinus's youth, and had communicated to him that versifying art which he had himself carried to a point of such marvellous subtlety. Paulinus was rich from his own patrimony and the demesne of his wife, and was covered with every honour; he had already reached the consulate, and there was nothing to which at the age of twenty-six years he might not have aspired; for who amidst the continual revolutions which shook the

throne of the Cæsars could know that the descendant of so many illustrious men might not one day be called to sit thereon? However, at that epoch, in 398, the news reached Bordeaux that Paulinus had clandestinely, and without the knowledge of that Roman aristocracy to the whole of which he was related or allied, been initiated into Christianity and had received baptism. On his becoming a Christian he had retired to his Spanish property, where he lived with his wife in retirement, but not in penitence, detached from the grandeurs of life, but not from its sweetness and illusion, as far as we can perceive from the following prayer in verse, which from that time he addressed to God:—"O Supreme Master of all things, grant my wishes if they are righteous. Let none of my days be sad, and no anxiety trouble the repose of my nights. Let the good things of another never tempt me, and may my own suffice to those who ask my aid. Let joy dwell in my house. Let the slave born on my hearth enjoy the abundance of my stores. May I live surrounded by faithful servants, by a cherished wife, and by the children which she will bring me." These are the wishes of a Christian, but not those of an anchorite. Paulinus shortly after had a child born to him which he lost at the end of eight days. This severed tie broke all those which bound Therasia and himself to the things of earth, and they both agreed to sell their goods and distribute them to the poor, to lead thenceforth a monastic life, and moreover to live in that state of simple fraternity which was authorized by the ancient customs of Christianity, and which caused many a saint after his conversion to keep his wife in the position of sister, as a sharer of his prayers and

almsdeeds. Therasia also became the companion of the retreat of Paulinus, and their letter to the magnates of the Church was signed *Paulinus et Therasia peccatores*. They left Spain and retired into the depth of Italy, to Nola in Campania, near the tomb of the martyr St. Felix, for whom Paulinus had conceived a singular devotion, and lived there in poverty and penitence.

This secession had at first surprised and then enraged the Roman aristocracy. What frenzy could have driven a man of such name and birth, clothed with so many honours, and endowed with so much genius, to abandon his hopes and break the succession of a patrician house? His relations did not forgive him, his brothers disowned him, and the members of his family who happened to come near him passed like a torrent, without stopping. But when temporal society rejected him, religious society received him with open arms, and Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose congratulated one another on counting another great doctor in their ranks. Paulinus became, in fact, a considerable theologian; but he had another talent within him, for a poetic soul had gradually formed and revealed itself amidst the interior agonies which his conversion had cost him. Ausonius, on learning the change in his disciple, had been at first smitten with despair, and had written him a powerful letter, in which he begged him no longer to afflict his master, thus: "Disdain not the father of thy spirit. It was I who was thy earliest master, the first to guide thy feet into the path of honour. It was I who introduced thee into the society of the Muses. O Muses, divinities of Greece, hear my prayer and restore a poet to

Latium." * St. Paulinus answered from his remote retreat, in verse, and in the following terms :—"Why, O my father, dost thou recall in my favour the Muses, whom I have renounced? This heart, henceforth dedicated to God, has no more room for Apollo nor for the Muses. Formerly I was one with you in invoking, not with the same genius, but the same ardour, a deaf Apollo from his Delphian cave, in calling the Muses divinities, and demanding from the woods and from the mountains that gift of speech which is given by God alone. But now a greater Deity enthralls my soul." "Nothing," wrote Paulinus again to his friend, "will tear you from my remembrance, during the entire span of that age which is granted to mortals. As long as I am captive in this body, and at whatever may be the distance which severs us, I will guard thee in the depth of my heart. Present everywhere for me, I shall behold you in thought, and embrace you in soul; and when delivered from the prison of this body I shall fly from earth into whatever star the common Father may place me, thither shall I carry thee in spirit, and the last moment which will release me from earth shall not deprive me of my tenderness for you; for that soul which survives our organs which have perished and is sustained by its celestial origin must of necessity preserve the affections, as it retains its existence. Filled with life and with memory, it cannot forget, as it cannot die."†

These were measures which Ausonius, with all his wit and learning, never found. His wit had taught him the artifices of the poetry of a decaying society

* Auson. ep. xxiv. ad Paulin.
† St. Paul. Carm. x. ii. 18 et seq.

which excelled in acrostics, in playing upon words, and every kind of subtlety, but had never taught him the secret of that heartfelt poetry which gushed forth in Paulinus and made him so greatly to surpass his master. Paulinus repudiated indeed the inspiration of the pagan muses, but he knew of an influence which was more powerful. He did not abjure poetry in his solitude at Nola, but still shared all the joys and sorrows of his friends, and his verses reached every place in which there was a tear to be dried or happiness to be partaken. We find amongst his writings accordingly an Epithalamium composed for the wedding of a Christian couple named Julian and Ya, in which he saluted charmingly the virgin spouses whom Christ was about to unite like two well-paired doves to the light yoke of His chariot. He removed far away the divinities who had formerly profaned marriage, Juno and Venus, and dwelt upon the just, true, and touching maxims of Christian matrimony, the necessary and fertile equality of the spouses before God, the affranchisement of woman from her former state of slavery, the conditions upon which he promised the presence of the Saviour at their wedding:—

> Tali conjugio cessavit servitus Evæ,
> Æquavitque suum libera Sara virum;
> Tali lege suis nubentibus adstat Jesus
> Pronubus, et vini nectare mutat aquam: *

Thoughts which have nothing in them of the classic tone, and through which a thoroughly new spirit was already breathing.

We find the same characteristic in the consolation afforded by him to Christian parents upon the death of

* St. Paulin. Carm. xxii. Epithal. Juliani et Yæ, v. 150.

a child, in which, borrowing the most charming images of the Faith, he represented the same child as playing in heaven with the one whom he had himself lost, the remembrance of whom had never been effaced from his heart, although he had sat so many years as a penitent at the tomb of Nola. "Live, young brothers, a happy couple in that eternal participation, inhabit those joyous dwellings, prevail both of you through your innocence, and may your prayers be more powerful than the transgressions of your parents."

Vivite participes æternum vivite fratres,
Et lætos dignum par habitate locos;
Innocuisque pares meritis peccata parentum,
Infantes, castis vincite suffragiis.*

This is far superior in charm to all the idyls of Ausonius or the panegyrics of Claudian, and nowhere before have we found such pathos, such life, and such inspiration. We could instance many other religious compositions, for the works of Paulinus are abundant, but those in which the inexhaustible effusion of his loving soul is especially manifested are the eighteen pieces composed for the anniversary of the feast of St. Felix. That martyr, to the service of whom Paulinus was consecrated, had bound the soul of the latter by the tie which the Scripture mentions as attaching the soul of David to that of Jonathan; and he never wearied in relating the life, the miracles, the festivals, the honours of St. Felix; the pilgrimages which were made to his tomb, the church raised above it, the homage paid to him from every quarter of Italy, and especially, as a theme which constantly recurred to his pen, the description of the popular festival which was

* St. Paulin. Carm. xxxiii. De obitu Celsi pueri, v 615.

celebrated in his memory. "The people filled the roads with their motley swarms. Pilgrims arrived from Lucania, Apulia, and Calabria, and others from sea-bound Latium. Even the Samnites descended from their mountains. Piety conquered the difficulty of the journey; there was no pause, and, unable to wait for day, the pilgrims marched by the light of torches. Not only did they bear their children in their bags, but they often brought with them their ailing cattle. Moreover, the walls of Nola seemed to expand till it equalled the royal city which enshrines the tombs of Peter and Paul. The church was bright with the light of lamps and tapers. White veils were hung over the gilded doors, the precinct was strewn with flowers, the porch was crowned with fresh garlands, and spring blossomed forth in the midst of winter." The poet then addressed in self-recollection the following invocation to the martyr. "Suffer me to remain seated at thy gates; let me cleanse thy courts every morning, and watch every night for their protection. Suffer me to end my days amid the employments which I love. We take our refuge within your hallowed pale, and make our nest in your bosom. It is therein that we are cherished and expand into a better life, and, casting off the earthly burden, we feel something divine springing up within us, and the unfolding of the wings which are to make us equal to the angels."

> Et tuus est nido sinus. Hoc bene foti,
> Crescimus, inque aliam mutantes corpora formam
> Terrena exuimur sorde, et subeuntibus alis
> Vertimur in volucres divino semine verbi.*

These, again, are fine verses, but they are more, for

* St. Paulin. Natalis, iii.

they were the chrysalis from which proceeded those still more striking lines of Dante:

> Non voccorgete voi que noi siam vermi
> Nati a formar l'angelica Farfalla?

The idea is similar, and Dante's often-cited comparison was first roughly sketched by a poet who sang long before him.

We may have long studied the poets and have sought in history for the true nature of poetry. After many years of search we know what poetry is, but cannot define it; it is impossible for us to grasp and examine, so to speak, face to face, that unknown thing which is veiled from our eyes like Love in the tale of Psyche, which only remained whilst invisible, the presence of which was evidenced by its voice, its accent, and the charm which surrounded it, but which evaporated on being perceived. So when we encounter anywhere the graces of imagination and an infinite tenderness of heart, the indefinable charm which no art can give, and the alternations of divine smiles and equally divine tears, we declare without a moment's doubt that poetry is there.

This man, then, was a Christian poet—an undeniable poet—but he did not stand alone. By his side we find a fellow, less tender perhaps, and less imbued with the spirit of Petrarch, but even more truly a poet through the abundance and richness of his compositions, and this was Prudentius. Paulinus, in fact, was essentially a bishop and a Father of the Church to whom poetry and grace had been given in addition; but the principal function, the sole vocation and glory of Prudentius, lay in his being the poet of the Christians.

Born in Spain at about the same time as Paulinus had been born in Gaul, about A.D. 348, he had passed through its schools, in which he had learnt eloquence, the art, as he said, of deceiving in sonorous words. After a striking success at the bar, after having governed two cities of his native country in succession, and having, lastly, been raised to some of the higher dignities in the imperial hierarchy, of which he does not define the nature, Prudentius, when fifty-seven years of age, and at the summit of all the honour which was open to a provincial advocate, grew weary of his dignities and occupations, and resolved to return to God; for his already whitening hair had warned him, as he tells us in a kind of little preface to his works, that it was time to consecrate what remained of his voice to Him. Some of the different compositions which flowed from his pen were devoted to theology and controversy; others to the inspiration of the lyric muse. However, in spite of his intention of serving the Catholic faith by discussion, as he boldly expressed it, he did not exaggerate the force of the arms which he was about to carry in the service of a holy cause, but spoke of them with a humility which was not without grace. "It is time to devote to God the remnant of the voice. Let hymns accompany the hours of the day, and let not the night be silent. Let heresies be combatted, the Catholic faith discussed, insults cast upon the idols, glorious verses rendered to martyrs, and praise to apostles. In the mansions of the wealthy, rich services of plate are spread out, the golden goblet gleams there, and yet the iron boiler is not wanting. We see therein the vessel of clay and the broad and heavy platter of silver, massy vessels of ivory, and

others hewn from the elm or the oak. So does Christ employ me as a valueless vessel for humble occupations, and permits me to remain in a corner of my Father's palace."

Hic paterno in atrio
Ut obsoletum vasculum ҫaducis
Christus aptat usibus,
Sinitque parte in anguli manere.*

We see that Prudentius announced himself at once as a poet, theologian, and controversialist armed for the fray; but he was not about to undertake the part in order to confine himself to turning theological treatises into verse, and to express thoughts which were not his own, with a fidelity which was often servile. He, on the contrary, found his inspiration and his fire in himself alone, and the accents of the poet betray more than once, especially in the two books composed against Symmachus, the habits of the orator. We have noticed how Symmachus had petitioned Valentinian for the restoration of the altar of Victory, and how, after an eloquent reply from St. Ambrose, he had encountered the refusal of the emperor. But his request survived in spite of this; it passed from hand to hand as the eloquent protest of Paganism against those who were overthrowing its altars, and it was on account of the power which it had retained over the minds of men that Prudentius felt bound to reply to it in two books of verse.

In the first of these he undertook to combat the worship of the false gods by the ordinary arguments, and then to celebrate, in triumphant accents, the defection of the nobility and populace of Rome, who

* Prudent. Peristephanon, preface.

had gradually passed from the service of these fictitious divinities to that of Christ. He delighted in counting all the families, the descendants of the Manlii and of Brutus, who rallied one by one around the Labarum. The idols remained abandoned, but the poet did not ask for their destruction, but rather that, as the deities had disappeared, their statues should be saved, and should remain standing as immortal monuments to witness to the past. He used the following expressions, which are curious as showing us one of the usages of Paganism, which archæology has never perfectly accounted for; the old statues are often found covered with a crust, the quality of which cannot always be determined, and which changes their colour. Prudentius said, in addressing the Roman senators—

> Marmora tabenti respergine tincta lavate,
> O proceres! liceat statuas consistere puras,
> Artificum magnorum opera hæc pulcherrima nostræ
> Ornamenta fiant patriæ, nec decolor usus,
> In vitium versæ monumenta coinquinet artis.*

They used to rub the statues of the gods with the blood of the victims as a means of slaking the thirst of Jupiter with the blood which he loved. These lines, which have not been often cited, are very remarkable, and we may notice generally in the works of this poet a passion for art which caused a mind which was thoroughly hostile to Paganism to demand, when once the old religion had been suppressed, the preservation of its statues, and to open widely to them the asylums built and guarded by Rome for many centuries, which were to receive, under the name of museums, all the trophies of vanquished Paganism.

* Prudent. contra Symmach. i. 502.

He replied, in his second book, to the arguments of those who found the cause of the victories of Rome in her piety towards the false gods, and sought for and pointed to the real cause in the designs of Providence, which used the Romans for the purpose of reconciling, ruling, and civilizing all the nations of the West, that a way might be laid open for Christianity, and her task made more easy when the whole universe was subject to the same law. Here his patriotic feeling broke out, and he triumphed in the name of Roman greatness at the refusal of Valentinian to rebuild the altar of Victory, which had been destroyed for ever, to give place to a higher protecting influence, and concluded by an ever-memorable request to Honorius, the son of Theodosius, for the abolition of the gladiatorial combats. He had just depicted the amphitheatre as it rang with the cries of the combatants. "May Rome, the golden city, no longer recognize such crimes as these. For this, I adjure thee, most illustrious chief of the Cæsarian Empire, command that so odious a sacrifice should disappear like the rest. This is the merit which the tenderness of thy father desired to leave for thee. 'My son,' he said, 'I leave thee thy share;' and so he made over to thee the honour of this design. Make then thine own, O Prince, the glory which has been reserved for this century. Thy father forbade that the sovereign city should be polluted with the blood of bulls; do thou not permit that hecatombs of human life should be offered therein. Let no one die any more that his agony may form a sport! Let the hateful arena be content with its wild beasts, and no longer afford the bloody spectacle of homicide! And let Rome, devoted to God, worthy of her prince, powerful by her

courage, be so also through her innocence."* Here was poetry put not only at the service of Christianity, but of that humanity which it had so often betrayed.

It would be more instructive perhaps to examine the theological poems of Prudentius, which dived into the deepest difficulties of dogma; to analyze the poem styled "Hamartigenia," in which he discussed all the objections levelled against the divinity of Christ, or that entitled "Psychomachia," in which he occupied himself with the origin of evil; to note the boldness with which the man who had up to that time been devoted to the business and the disputes of the bar attacked the highest metaphysical questions, discussed the existence of the two principles of good and evil, explained how the mind could perceive without the assistance of the senses, and traced out the inner struggle between the flesh and the spirit. He grasped and expressed these truths with an energy which he might have borrowed from Lucretius, and which recalled the language of Rome's old philosopher-poet; whilst on the other side the reader might, from the Christian idea which reigned throughout, imagine himself transported into that paradise of Dante wherein the poet, emboldened by the presence of Beatrice, dared to probe the most formidable topics of theology.

But perhaps Prudentius was even greater as a lyric poet. We must look to his two collections styled the "Cathemerinon" and the "Peristephanon" for these hymns, twelve of which were devoted to the different hours of the day or the different solemnities of the Christian year, and fourteen to a celebration of the anniversaries of the martyrs. It was in these especially

* Prudent. contra Symmach. ii. 1114 et seq.

that he showed the research and perseverance with which he had mastered all the forms of the ancient versification. Thus all the Horatian metres were to be found in these hymns, used in the same variety if not with the same purity, and often with an attention to rule which is surprising in a century of decline, whilst whole passages might be cited as models of a Latinity which was superior to that of the Latin poets at the end of the second and even of the first century. The two characteristics of his poetry were gracefulness and force; the former appeared especially in passages wherein he showed the earth pouring forth her flowers to surround and veil the cradle of the Saviour; or where he described the Holy Innocents as the flowers of martyrdom whom the sword had reaped as the whirlwind reaps the budding roses, and who play as children in heaven, and under the very altar of God, with their palm and their crown. This again was followed by a description of heaven, which in its quaintness foreshadowed the loveliest paintings of Fra Angelico da Fiesole; and, in fact, when we listen to Prudentius as he gracefully depicts the souls of the blessed singing in chorus as they moved, and scarcely brushing the lilies of the field which failed to bend beneath their footsteps, we might well imagine ourselves gazing upon one of his heavenly pictures.

But the power of the poet appeared far more when he described the conflicts of the martyrs; and he caught, as it were, all their fire when he represented St. Fructuosus on the pile, St. Hippolytus at the heels of the untamed horses, or St. Laurence on the gridiron. The latter was one of the dearest memories of the

Roman people, for that apostle and martyr of the faith was also the martyr of charity, and had suffered for refusing to give up not only the Christ whom he bore in his heart, but those treasures also of the Church which were hoarded for the nourishment of her poor; and Rome has shown her gratitude by the fact—so popular has the memory of the deacon, who was the servant of the poor, ever remained—that after the Virgin there is no saint, including St. Peter himself, who has had as many churches dedicated to him. Prudentius sang of him, and was led through the enthusiasm inspired by the face of the young saint to put into his mouth the following prayer, which again showed that Christian inspiration which surveyed the destiny of Rome with a glance of assurance:—"Christ, only name beneath the sun, splendour and virtue of the Father, author of the earth and the sky, and true founder of these walls, Thou who didst place Rome as the supreme head of all things, willing that the entire universe should serve the people who bear the toga and the sword, that the customs, genius, tongues, and worships of the hostile nations might be brought under the same laws, behold how the human race hath passed in its entirety beneath the law of Remus, and opposing manners have approached in the same word and the same thought. O Christ, grant to Thy Romans that their city may be Christian, that city through which Thou hast given a like faith to all the cities of the earth. May all the members of her Empire unite in the same Creed. The world has bowed; may its sovereign city bend in its turn; grant that Romulus may become faithful, and Numa believe in Thee."

Mansuescit orbis subditus,
Mansuescat summum caput.
Fiat fidelis Romulus,
Et ipse jam credat Numa.*

But lofty thoughts and strong expressions are the property of all men of eloquence, whilst gracefulness is the distinction and inimitable characteristic of poets, and, therefore, it marked as with a first seal all the compositions of Prudentius. They always returned to his own person with a great charm, and concluded with thoughts which left a soothing influence upon the mind, whether he showed the white dove escaping from the pile of St. Eulalia, or invited young maidens to bring baskets full of violets to the tomb of the virgin martyrs, reserving to himself, as he said, "the task of weaving garlands of verses, which, though pale and withered, had yet a certain festal air;" or whether, again, the poet concluded his history of the martyrdom of St. Romanus by this touching prayer: "I should wish, ranked as I shall be on the left amongst the goats, to be recognized from afar, and that to the prayers of the martyr the merciful judge might turn and say, 'Romanus has prayed to me; let them bring me that goat, let him stand as a lamb on my right hand, and let him be vested in the fleece.'"

Vellem sinister inter hædorum greges
Ut sum futurus, eminus dignoscerer,
Atque, hoc precante, dicerit rex optimus:
Romanus orat; transfer hunc hædum mihi:
Sit dexter agnus, induatur vellere.†

This man, whose verses we are now admiring, was destined not to remain without admirers. The Middle Age rendered him a homage which was equal

* Peristeph. ii 412 et seq.
† Ibid. x. 1136 et seq.

to that received by the most illustrious teachers, Boethius, Bede, and St. Boniface. All the writers of the seventh century loved to borrow his verses and place them as examples by the side of the finest rhythms of antiquity. In later times he was cited as the first and the most famous of Christian poets. At last we find St. Bruno, one of the most learned men of that learned Germany of an epoch that is but little known, one of the men of that Teutonic revival which we have not studied yet, but may examine one day in company, placing in the library of his Church a copy of Prudentius, which thenceforth was scarcely ever out of his hands. This poet held his post of honour up to the Revival. The Revival entered the Christian school and found therein Christian poets, ranked beneath those pagan bards to whom, as befitted the most eloquent, the first place had been granted. Virgil and Horace still retained the honour which antiquity had bestowed, but as for the poets of Christianity, since their language was not of Ciceronian purity, since Prudentius had been convicted of using seventy-five words which had no precedent amongst earlier writers, they were swept away and put to flight forthwith as a barbarous crew which had been introduced into the school under the pretext of their Christianity, that the pagans might remain sole masters of the ground.

There were also some accessory reasons for the step. Prudentius had become somewhat irksome with his passionate devotion towards the martyrs, and these numberless acts of homage to the saints were so many damaging testimonies which must be suppressed or silenced. In vain did some men of taste and learning, as for instance Louis Vivès, one of the most famous

and zealous adherents of the Revival, complain courageously of this, and demand a resting-place for the instructors of our fathers; it was necessary that they should disappear.

Let us be more equitable, let our admiration be wide enough to render to the poets of the first centuries of Christianity the justice which for so long a time was not refused them; and as Prudentius, fervent convert and penitent as he was, tolerantly wished that even the statues of the false gods should remain standing in the Forum, so let us reclaim for the early Christian poets their standing-place before the school. There would be no rashness in the act; and yet, in spite of all the poetry to which we have been bound to point in the works of these writers, which we have just traced in a perhaps too lengthy analysis, we must at length affirm that the true Christian poetry, and its very basis, was not there, but in a quarter which we shall now proceed to examine.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN ART.

We ought to have closed our history of the Christian literature of the fifth century with that of poetry; and yet when we sought for that poetical inspiration which seemed to spring forth with such abundant life from the great scenes of Christianity, it was with difficulty that we found it. It did not lurk in those numerous epic and dialectic compositions in which so many writers laboured, with more exactness than originality, to bend the stories of Scripture or the hard points of dogma to the metres of Virgil and of Ovid. It is true that we perceived the poetic ray upon the brow of two men of different genius and destiny, St. Paulinus and Prudentius, the former of whom renounced honour, fortune, and the whole world in order to consume his days at the tomb of St. Felix of Nola, though he never gave up those sweet rhythms which flowed as naturally as tears, and served, like tears, as an outflow of his feelings; whilst the latter devoted his last days to the service of the faith, and employed himself in defending its doctrines and its glory. We saw how power and grace combined to weave his verses into so many crowns, which, as he said himself, he used to hang amongst the fresh garlands with which the faithful decked the

sepulchres of the saints. Poetry doubtless existed therein, but not entirely; certainly not in such a measure as might have been expected after three centuries of persecution, after Constantine and the Nicene Council, in the times of the Fathers, and in the days in which the heroic anchorites flourished like so many plants of the desert. Then if poetry cannot be found complete there, it must have existed elsewhere. There must have been some source whence it sprang in abundance to flow on and spread abroad over the succeeding ages.

Symbolism is the common fount of all Christian poetry. Symbolism is at once a law of nature and a law of the human mind. It is a law of nature: for what, after all, is creation but a magnificent language which is speaking to us by night and by day? The heavens tell us of their author; and all created beings speak not only of Him who made them, but of each other, the meanest and most obscure unfolding the history of the sons of light and glory. What is the returning bird of passage but the sign of the spring which it brings with it, and of stars which have been coursing on for months? And does not the fragile reed which casts its shadow on the sand serve to register the height of the sun on the horizon? Thus do all existences bear mutual witness, arouse and summon one another from one end of immensity to the other, and thus do their continual combinations, their numberless symbols and harmonies, form the poetry of the world which we inhabit.

Thus the Almighty speaks by signs, and man in his turn, when he speaks to God, exhausts the whole series of signs which his intelligence can grasp. What other language could the human intellect speak than

that which it has received, and in which it has been formed? And therefore prayer alone does not satisfy man when he is addressing God; he desires music and those sacred ceremonies which also express in their way, by their development and the choice songs which they contain, by their pauses and their advances, the movements of the soul, its headlong flight towards the infinite, and the want of power which forces it to halt on the way. A sacrifice is wanted, too, to be the symbol of adoration and of human impotence in presence of the Divine Power. Therefore also the temple appears to act as a grand and abiding witness, planted upon the earth in order to mark the fact that intellects are present which desire, after their own fashion, to attest their efforts to reach their Creator. Thus the whole of nature instructs mankind by symbols, and it is by symbols that man replies to nature's Author.

The same idea appears in Christianity, and in Scripture God spoke only in the language of symbol. The entire Old Testament is full of realities, and has, doubtless, an historical value, but, at the same time, all the patriarchs and prophets represented Him who was to come. Joseph and Moses were but the precursors and, at the same time, the signs of Him who was one day to accomplish the law, and in whom every type was to find its reality. The New Testament, in its turn, only addresses us in parables; and Christ Himself, using the familiar language of rustic life, that kind of life which is most natural and most grateful to humanity, said one day, "I am the vine," and on another occasion, "I am the good shepherd." It was the same in the whole ulterior development of the New Testament. St. Paul interpreted Scripture by means of allusions

and allegories; the two mountains represented, according to him, the two covenants, and the Red Sea, which the Hebrews had crossed, became in his eyes the symbol of baptism. Again, in the Apocalypse, that especially symbolic book, each figure was produced with a mysterious meaning attached to it; and when St. John represented the new Jerusalem as resplendent with gold and jewels, with its wall of precious stones and its gates of pearl, it was not mere material splendour, nor a flattery of the senses which he offered to the men who were daily dying, braving martyrdom and renouncing every treasure, as the supreme end of their efforts; for in the language of the East every precious stone had a symbolical value, which was admitted according to rule into all the ancient schools, and represented in a mystic manner certain vague virtues of the soul and certain forces of the human understanding or of divine grace.

Therefore, when the Christians had to compose their language we need not wonder that, imitating the Bible, they formed one that was figurative and full of types and symbols; or that when the first apostolic fathers, St. Clement and St. Barnabas, interpreted the Scriptures, allegory superabounded throughout their works and in their interpretations. About the same time a Christian writer named Hermas, whose history has remained unknown, but whose book had preserved a singular character of antiquity and beauty, wishing to instruct the faithful, did so by means of parables, after the fashion of the ancients. His book was divided into three parts; the visions, the precepts, and the parables. In the visions, for instance, the Church was represented to him under the figure of a young girl, of

a queen, or of a mother whom age had already marked with its character and endowed also with a sign of authority. The institutions and callings to which God had given the support of His will always appeared to him beneath that living and sensible figure, and when he desired to represent the diversity of human conditions, he employed the following analogy. Hermas, whilst walking one day in the country, saw a vine and an elm, and paused to consider them. Thereupon the shepherd appeared to him: "That vine," said he, "bears much fruit, and the elm has none; yet if the climbing vine was not supported by it, it would produce but little, and that of scanty value. Therefore, as it can produce no fruit abundantly or of good quality without the support of the elm, the elm is not less fertile than the vine. The man of wealth is generally poor in the eyes of the Lord, because his treasures lead him away from God and his prayer is feeble. But if he gives to the poor, the poor, who is rich in the eyes of the Lord, and whose prayer is powerful, prays for him, and God answers it. Thus, if the rich lean upon the poor man like the vine upon the elm, they both become rich, the one by almsdeeds, the other by prayer." *

We see that this symbolical language penetrated and even became necessary to Christian manners. After the period of liberty which Christianity enjoyed up to the time of the first persecutions, the rulers of the Church recognized the necessity of veiling its mysteries in the discipline of the Secret, and they were communicated gradually, so as not to be immediately exposed to profanation from the unbelieving. The

* Hermas Pastor, i. 3, Similitudo Secunda.

necessity of keeping the mysteries secret, and also of a mutual recognition among Christians, led to the adoption of rallying signals, intelligible to those alone who had learnt their meaning, and consequently to a symbolic system whereby Christians might interchange ideas without laying them open to sacrilegious minds. The number of these symbols also increased infinitely, and at the end of the third century had become so great that Meliton of Sardis, a father of the Greek Church, wrote a book named the "Key," devoted to an explanation of these symbols, which at that remote period had so multiplied as to render a scientific interpretation of them necessary.

In the fifth century St. Eucher wrote the Book of Formulas for the spiritual understanding of the Scriptures—*Liber formularum spiritualis intelligentiæ*—in which he gave precisely the mystic sense of the numbers, flowers, figures of animals, of plants, and precious metals, which had all a meaning, and had puzzled the ancient philosophy by their value and mutual relation. He explained therein, after the manner of a great symbolical dictionary, all the signs then used in the language of theology, the figures of the lion, the stag, the lamb, the dove, the palm, the olive, the pomegranate, and many others. It showed as it were the secret of Christian hieroglyphics, unveiled voluntarily by a priest, when, as the danger of the persecutions and with it the necessity of the discipline of the Secret had vanished, the Church could satisfy her inherent craving to communicate everything, whereby it differed so entirely from the ancient priesthood whose theory and practice had ever been to hide and to obscure.

It is because all religions are necessarily symbolical, that they become the guiding principle and cradle of the arts, for all the arts are born beneath the shadow of a religion. We need not wonder at this, for if man is obliged when he desires to say anything, to employ figures which, precisely because they are material, always remain inferior to his idea, much rather must the same be the case when he undertakes to speak to God, of God, of things invisible, of all the infinite conceptions which the understanding can hardly grasp, of which it catches a hasty glimpse, but which pass in a moment like the lightning, and which, though it longs to arrest them, have disappeared before we have been able to compare the imperfect expression with the very idea which it would render. This is why no sign can satisfy man when he wishes to speak of these eternal things, why all methods are employed, and so to speak come all at once under his hand. All that the chisel, the brush, or stones piled towards the heaven into inaccessible heights can effect, all the harmonious illusions that speech can produce when sustained by music, may be used by man, and yet nothing result to satisfy the just demands of his mind, when once it has been occupied with these mighty and immortal ideas. Yet in spite of that feebleness, the ideal which he pursues suffers itself to be glimpsed at with a sort of transparency; and it is this transparence of the ideal through the forms in which it is clothed that truly constitutes poetry, which in its primitive aspect does not lie only in verse nor in rhymed words, but in every effort of the human will to grasp the ideal and to render it either in colour, or in stone, or by any of the means which have been granted to strike the senses

and to communicate to the understanding of another the conceptions of one's own.

We see, then, that Christian art found its destined cradle in those Catacombs which formed the cradle of the Christian faith, and we must descend into them in order to find the origin of the poetry which we have sought in books. But the people who assembled there were too fervent and full of emotion to be satisfied by one or two of the methods whereby man is able to translate his thoughts. They were also too poor and ignorant, too much composed of the lower classes of the Roman society, to be able to carry perfection very far in their use of the arts; so they were obliged at once to essay all the arts and all the methods whereby ideas can be expressed, in order imperfectly to render those emotions with which the glad tidings of the faith had lately filled their hearts. We must picture to ourselves the Catacombs as a vast labyrinth of subterranean galleries, stretching for a considerable distance beneath the suburbs and the Campagna of Rome. No less than sixty of these Christian cemeteries have been counted, and the circumvallations which they formed around the ancient city extended, according to the popular tradition which is repeated by the herdsmen of the Campagna, as far as the sea. But on a descent into these sunless haunts, one is more struck by their depths than by the space over which they spread themselves. The entrance to them lies chiefly through the old quarries of *puzzolano*, which doubtless supplied material for the monuments of Rome, and were the work of the ancients. But beneath and beside these quarries the Christians themselves have dug out of the granulated tufa other galleries of a totally different form, which could never

have served for the extraction of stone, but only for the object for which they were used. All these galleries descend to two, three, or four stories beneath the surface of the earth, that is to say, to eighty, a hundred feet or more; they branch into countless windings, sometimes ascending and sometimes descending, as if to balk the steps of the persecutors when, engaged in their task, they press upon the crowd of the faithful by whom their approach had been heard. To right and left the face of the wall is pierced by oblong horizontal niches, like the shelves of a library, each shelf forming a burial-place, which served, according to its depth, for one or more bodies. As soon as the burial-place was filled, the ledge was closed by blocks of marble, bricks, or whatever material chance threw in the way of these persecuted workmen. Here and there these long corridors opened into chapels, in which the mysteries were celebrated, or upon chambers in which the catechumens received their instruction and penitents made their expiation.

We must give immediate proof that these great works were really those of the early Christian centuries, the ages of persecution. Of this we have evidence in the writings of Prudentius and St. Jerome, who both descended there more than once to honour the sepulchres of the martyrs, and spoke of the place as much with awe as with admiration. St. Jerome, when a young student at Rome, in the zeal of his soul, descended every Sunday into these bowels of the earth, and tells us that these occasions always recalled the word of the prophet, *Descendunt ad infernum viventes*, and the line of Virgil—

Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent;

a mingling of the great traditions of the faith with secular associations which shows the double nature of the education bestowed upon Jerome and his contemporaries.*

In fact, at first sight, the works of the Catacombs show traces of the effects of terror and necessity; but on a closer inspection, they appear full of eloquence, and had the monuments of architecture no other object but that of instructing and moving the hearts of men, no construction in the world would afford such mighty and terrible lessons. For when we have penetrated these depths of the earth, we learn perforce that which is life's great lesson—the severance of one's self from what is visible, and even from that light itself whereby all things are visible. The places of burial close in upon the whole, as death envelopes life; and even the oratories which open here and there to right and left are like so many days opening upon immortality to console man in some measure for the night in which he is living here. Thus did architecture achieve there all that it was destined to achieve in after times, in instructing, in moving, and in pervading everything.

Let those then who, when young, wander out on their pilgrimages of travel descend into these vast caverns, and tell us on their return if they did not find emotions there that none of the great constructions of antiquity, neither the remnants of the Coliseum, nor of the Parthenon, nor of any other of the buildings which seemed to have been destined to immortality, could ever produce.

But this was not all, for these oratories were covered with paintings, which were often of the rudest nature.

* St. Hieronym. in Ezechielem, c. 40.

There were but few great artists amongst the Christians of the early centuries, amongst those poor plebeians whom Christianity preferred. The Apelles and Parrhasius of the time remained in the service of Nero, and decorated his golden horse. It was the poverty-stricken refuse which descended there, and yet something superhuman betrayed itself amidst the weakness and powerlessness of a degraded art. On descending, indeed, into those Catacombs, which appear to have been dug in the remotest centuries, we can recognize the faithfully observed tradition of the arts of antiquity, and find paintings which may be said, without exaggeration, to show some remant of the old beauty, without any evidence of that decline of the Roman art which was not strongly pronounced until the second century. Thus the paintings themselves bear witness to the antiquity of the walls on which they were traced, and to beliefs which they demonstrate; and it was, in fact, impossible for the nascent Christian art not to reproduce, in many respects, the traditions of art as they existed in the classic epoch. Some pagans, like the Scipios, had possessed painted and even subterranean burial-places, in which they were accustomed to bury the dead of the family, after the manner of the Christians. In the tombs of the Scipios, the Nasos, and others, paintings and cheerful designs, such as of flowers, animals, Victories, and genii, have been found spread over the walls, as if to enliven the sadness of death. What wonder if the humble diggers (*fossores*), as they were called, who were the first to decorate the Christian burial-places and chapels, reproduced in many ways the processes, figures, and subjects of the ancient artists? It was thus that the same allegorical figures,

which often seemed only fit for Paganism, such as Victories, or winged genii, adorned several Christian tombs; as, for instance, the three paintings of the cemetery of St. Callistus, in which we find the figure of Orpheus represented after the ancient manner. But the wisdom of the Church, ever watchful over the simple ignorance of her poor workmen, was careful to develop the symbol, to purify it, and give it a novel significance. She achieved the same for art that she had achieved for language; it was necessary that she should adopt the ancient tongue, but in doing so she had given to the ancient terms a new sense, which was destined to add a fresh fertility to eloquence. Orpheus figured amongst these Christian types; but, according to St. Clement of Alexandria, he figured there as an image of Christ, who also attracted all hearts, and stirred the coldest rocks of the desert, and the fiercest beasts of the field; as he figured later in the Christian art of every century down to the time of Calderon, who gave to one of the most admirable of his *Autos Sacramentales* the title of the Divine Orpheus. Likewise, archæologists have good reason in affirming that the figure of the Good Shepherd, which the painters of the Catacombs represented on the archivolt of their oratories, was copied from the antique.

The ancients used often to represent pastoral employments in their places of burial and elsewhere; and amongst those graceful pictures in which the painting and sculpture of antiquity delighted, none was more pleasing than that of the young shepherd bearing a kid on his shoulder. The Christians in their turn adopted for their sepulchres this figure of the shepherd, with the chlamys and the complete details of his costume,

and placed on his shoulder the traditional kid; for the ignorant artist, unfaithful to the text of the Gospel, which speaks of a lamb, generally copied exactly from the ancient picture, without troubling himself as to conformity with Scripture.

This is the account given by the archæologists, but it is a somewhat exaggerated interpretation, and we shall see how a deeper and more enlightened criticism can throw sudden light upon an obscure point and bring out all the significance and beauty of a symbol.

It happened that at the very moment in which the Christians were digging the Catacombs of St. Callistus at Rome, at the end of the second century, there was a question in the Church as to one of the gravest points which she has ever mooted, as to whether the promise of pardon to the sinner had been made for once or for many times, and whether the lapsed could be admitted to penance. A considerable sect, the Montanists, presided over by the most illustrious of the seceders from orthodoxy, namely Tertullian, maintained that pardon was only extended to him who had sinned once, but not to the man who had fallen again; that the good shepherd bears upon his shoulders the strayed sheep indeed, but not the goat, which at the day of judgment would be placed on the left of the judge, whilst only the sheep would be seen on his right. The Christians pointed, in objection, to the parable of the good shepherd, whereupon he answered, with bitterness, that the shepherd had gone in quest of the sheep, but he could nowhere find that he had sought for the goat; and in his work, "De Pudicitiâ," he reproached the Bishop of Rome with going in search of goats

instead of confining his attention to strayed sheep. It was then that the merciful instinct of the Church gave a loving and lofty answer to the pitiless men who refused pardon to the weakness which fell once and had fallen again, and caused the good shepherd to be painted in the Catacombs, no longer with the lamb alone on his shoulders, but with a goat, with that type of the sinner who seemed lost for ever, but whom the shepherd notwithstanding brings back in triumph on his shoulders. And thus in the place in which some have only seen an error of a workman, an awkward copy of the antique, is unfolded a charming mystery of grace and mercy.

Around this picture of the good shepherd, which generally fills the keystone of the vault of the Catacombs, are arranged four compartments, separated from one another by arches of flower designs. These generally contain paintings of four sacred subjects, two taken from the Old and two from the New Testament, put in apposition for the purpose of comparison and parallel. These subjects scarcely vary. The most frequently represented have been about twenty in number, and this has been attributed to poverty of genius in the artists of the time, who could never get beyond a small circle of conventional models. Yet, if we examine the subjects, we find that they are not always identical, that they follow no absolute type, but are treated with a certain freedom. Some of the representations, as, for instance, that of the original fall, vary singularly, according to their artists and their dates, and it is evident that the restricted number of subjects is owing to the need of symbolizing thereby a certain number of dogmas, to their symbolical nature, and to their

possessing a deeper meaning than that which they express. Thus, the serpent placed between our two first parents expresses sin; the water running from the rocks represents baptism; Moses bringing down manna from heaven symbolizes the Eucharist; the figure of the paralytic healed and bearing his pallet on his back points to penance; that of Lazarus expresses the idea of the resurrection; whilst the three children in the furnace, Jonas cast into the sea, and Daniel in the lions' den, symbolize martyrdom under its three principal forms, by fire, by water, and by wild beasts. But it is remarkable that reference was always made to the triumphant martyrs who had been crowned of God, and never, except in the case of St. Hippolytus, to those who were contemporary. It was not till some age afterwards that the Christians traced some pictures of their martyrs in the Catacombs, but the Christians of the times of persecution, those men whom Tacitus had branded as the horror and shame of the human race, never chose to depict what they had suffered themselves, or the tortures they had seen inflicted upon their fathers, their children, and their wives. This fact surely demands our admiration, that, whilst pagan art was wallowing in the grossest and most odious realism, and whilst, in order to stir the senses of those worn-out men, it was necessary to burn a slave at the close of the tragedy of "Hercules on Mount Æta," or to outrage a woman on the stage in the course of some play by Euripides, whilst this same realism held every Roman theatre, and reigned throughout the triumphant city which queened it over the world, those few poor and detested men, without influence, hidden beneath the earth in places where they could hear, strictly

speaking, the yells of the crowd, whose cry was "the Christians to the lions," could only give us as a type the martyrdom of antiquity, but never that which they were suffering themselves, or figures of the resurrection, and other graceful, amiable, and touching symbols, thus affording us at once the finest example of an art which loves not materialism, and of a charity which can pardon and forget.

The Catacombs had not afforded an asylum to architecture and painting alone, although sculpture necessarily found less place there as being the special art of Paganism. The representations of the gods were less often in pictures than statues, and therefore sculpture did not now find such favour as painting. Doubtless we find it employed from the earliest times to help out words in the inscriptions which were placed upon the tombs. Often did a sign, a hieroglyphic, or a symbol, lightly traced with the point of a chisel, tell more than many lines from the hand of the most skilful poet, who would have sought to express the grief of those who were left, or the faith of those who had been taken. Already had the ancients beautifully expressed the frailty of human life by a flower upon the tomb, or the rapidity of the days of man by a ship under sail; and the Christians adopted these signs with that excellent spirit and admirable good sense of the nascent Church, which, as we have already seen from the history of literature and of philosophy, took from antiquity all its beauty and its worth.

And in adapting these signs the Church added new ones, and gave consolation in death after her own manner by placing on the tombs the dove with the branch as a type of hope and of immortality; the ark

of Noah instead of the common bark, as the ark which gathers mankind into a place of safety, and bears it over the abyss; and, lastly, the fish, as the mystic sign of Christ, because the Greek word ἰχθυς comprised the five initials of the various names by which He was designated.* The latter sign had been agreed upon among Christians; had served as a rallying signal and means of mutual recognition; whilst the fish also expressed the believer who had been dipped in the waters of baptism. Thus a certain burial-place, the inscription of which has been preserved, bore no verse, nor even a word in prose, which could in any way point to the dead, but only showed the fish and the five miraculous loaves. Yet it was eloquent, for it said, here lies a man who has been baptized and has tasted the miraculous bread of the eucharist, and afforded thus a forcible and expressive epitaph. Sometimes words came in as an auxiliary, and sometimes with a graceful simplicity, as in the case of that plain inscription, τόπος Φιλήμονος. Sometimes a word of tenderness and gentleness appeared on the tomb of a child, *Glorentius felix agnellus Dei;* or at others the fear of the judgment of God is expressed with a terrible exclamation, as in the inscription of the father of Benirosus, *Domine, ne quando adumbratur spiritus veneris.*

Lastly, the inscription in verse burst forth and spread over these sepulchres, and the true poetry in rhyme set its seal upon the stones of the Catacombs. The following verses relating to a child of four years old, though of an extreme rudeness, are remarkable from the classic association which they perpetuate:

* Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς, Θεοῦ υἱὸς, Σωτήρ.

Hic jacet infelix proprio Cicercula nomen
Innocens, qui vix semper in pace quiescat,
Cui cum bis binos natura ut compleret annos,
Abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo.

Certainly one could not expect to find a line of Virgil at the close of these Christian but barbarous verses. But these tattered memories of antiquity apart, everything then was popular and even coarse. We must not wonder at the multitude of faults in orthography and grammar, nor at the number of Latin words written in Greek characters, nor the many other solecisms and barbarisms of which these inscriptions are so full. It was in this very thing that the glory of that ignorant, coarse, and impoverished people lay; it was thus, moreover, that they were destined to triumph over the rich and powerful class above their heads, who inhabited the gilded places beneath which they dug their burial-places. No doubt, had these Christian stones with their verses been brought to the rhetoricians of Rome, they would have shrugged their shoulders and asked how miserable Galilæans who wrote so badly could dream of reforming the human race. Yet it was from the depths of those cemeteries and the poetry of those tombs that the new art was to proceed which would change the intellectual aspect of the world.

It would be our proper task to look for the destiny of art at the precise epoch of which we are treating, that is, after the period of the Catacombs, but it was necessary first to trace out its roots. It was, in fact, after Christian art had emerged from the Catacombs, and after the era of persecutions had closed, that it was seen to develop with more liberty and variety; that its branches detached themselves, though still being nourished by the same sap and covered with the same

flowers. Sculpture was still supervised and restrained, for it was natural that suspicion should hover round the sculptor at a time when it was so difficult to preserve him from the perilous seduction exercised over his mind by the old images of Jupiter. Yet we must hesitate to believe that this art was forbidden in the early ages of Christendom. We find a statue of St. Hippolytus, in the time of the persecutions, of incontestible authenticity and of as early date as the third century, which is now placed in the library of the Vatican. There are also statues of St. Peter and of the Good Shepherd, which date from the earliest Christian times. But it was especially in bas-relief and the decoration of sarcophagi that sculpture placed its career and found its liberty. It generally represented therein the same subjects from the two Testaments that we have remarked in the Catacombs; and the aim likewise was to render through symbols and figures the chief mysteries of the Christian faith. However, some novel subjects were added, as is shown by the admirable but unfinished studies upon the Christian sarcophagi of the fourth and fifth centuries. A great number of these are to be found in the Vatican; but they should be compared with those at Ravenna, and the fine collection already made of them at Arles; Rome, Ravenna, and Arles being the three great Imperial cities during the fifth century, the latter for some time the capital of the Gauls, having succeeded Trèves in that dignity. In each of these towns a different school of Christian sculpture was formed, all possessing common rules, but each claiming a peculiar originality. The same subjects were not equally popular in each place; at Arles, for instance, we find the passage of the Red Sea

treated as often as three times in the sarcophagi of St. Trophimus. The breadth, scope, and life of these point to the skill of a practised chisel, and are imitations of the finest battle-pieces upon the ancient bas-reliefs. At Arles, again, we may find historical subjects which are to be met with nowhere else; as, for instance, two warriors kneeling before Christ like Constantine before the Labarum, which signified the recognition of religious truth by the temporal power, and the submission to truth by the bearer of the sword; an expressive and simple image of a leading fact of the epoch in which the temporal authority was bending the knee before the truth which it had so often persecuted. We may content ourselves with pointing to the presence of these great schools of sculpture which found disciples in the other great cities of Italy and Gaul, for we find Christian sarcophagi at Parma, Milan, and on the shores of the Rhine, which, though of not an equal merit, do not the less bear witness to a condition of the art which merits study. We must not, as has been too often the case, hasten to judge of the sculpture of these times by the triumphal arch of Constantine at Rome, or say that, as but four or five bas-reliefs of real merit can be found there, which themselves had been pillaged from earlier monuments, it stands as proof of the impotence of the contemporary artists, who were incapable themselves of producing anything worthy of examination. It is true that the frieze has been covered with the most disproportionate figures, from which all the sculpture of the fourth and fifth centuries has been judged, but was it not a period when court artists might under the favouring caprice of the prince crowd

the place which should have been filled by the works of true merit with their coarse and miserable performances? Does not every epoch show the same inequality in talent? Is not the temple of Phigalia with its rude carvings exactly contemporaneous with the Parthenon upon which are displayed the unrivalled compositions of Phidias? However, side by side with those trivial works which disgrace the monument which bears them, we possess sarcophagi of incontestable beauty, and there are several amongst those at Ravenna which testify to a great purity of conception. Accordingly we cannot doubt that sculpture had not perished, but was defending itself, preparatory to a difficult journey across the dark ages, and if we lay to the account of this art the capitals of our pillars, the façades and the portals of our cathedrals, we shall gain some idea of what it was destined to achieve.

Following sculpture and enjoying greater favour, came painting, and if some were scandalized at the number not only of sacred but of profane figures with which it was the fashion to embellish the churches, the custom was defended by the greatest minds of the time. It is hard to conceive how it can be stated that the employment of images was a novelty in the Church, when all the writings of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries were filled with witnessings to the religious use of images, and the place they had in the decoration of all the basilicas, whether in the East or West, with the exception of a certain number of provinces, as for instance Judæa, where it was feared they might offend the prejudices of the Jews. But in spite of this, the evidence is unanimous, and in the fifth century we find letters written by the anchorite

St. Nilus to Olympiodorus, the prætorian prefect, praising his intention of decorating the basilica which he had just founded with paintings. We have also some letters in verse, a kind of poem, of St. Paulinus, in which he explained the ornament with which he had enriched the church at Nola, and described the pictures which he caused to be drawn upon the porticoes.

Such is the proof and also the justification of the use of painting in the Christian basilicas. This art also was to be perpetuated in times which seemed the most unfavourable to it, as is shown by the innumerable Byzantine Virgins that are to be seen throughout Italy, pictures that are very ancient and often nearly effaced, and which may be recognized still at St. Urbano della Cafarella, near Rome, in the subterranean church of St. Peter, in St. Cæcilia, in the church of the Four Crowned Saints, and in that of St. Laurence, which contains a succession of pictures dating from the eighth to the thirteenth century; of the time, that is to say, in which the art was supposed to have been entirely extinct. The genius of painting scarcely appeared, indeed, in these generally coarse attempts; but it was not entirely eclipsed, and reappeared under another form in the mosaics with which the churches were adorned from the fifth to the thirteenth century; for it was in 424 that Pope Celestine I. ornamented in that manner the church of St. Sabina. In 433, Sixtus III. caused those which still exist, after fourteen hundred years, in the basilica of St. Mary Major, to be executed; and thus that representation of the bloodless Cross decked with precious stones, with the figure of the Virgin beneath, the history of the infancy of Christ around, and the twenty scenes from the history of the

Old Testament at its side, dates entirely from the time of that Pope. Little by little this mosaic work crept into all the great Roman basilicas, such as St. Peter and St. Paul; and, at length, in the capital of the Christian world, and in the great cities of Italy, Milan, Ravenna, Verona, and Venice, the apses of the churches were filled with that imposing and resplendent delineation of Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem which glowed so brightly, as if to reanimate the hopes of the faithful amidst the perils of those ensanguined centuries.

The mosaic filled the whole Romanesque period, survived until the rise of the Gothic, and soon gained possession of the ogival arcades of the churches built by the Normans in Sicily; thus at Monreale and in the Palatine chapel of Palermo, the traditional figures of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints still shine after the conception of the artists who were contemporary with Constantine and Theodosius. So obstinate was the prevalent fidelity to the ancient types that it extended even to borrowing images from antiquity, and we may cite this as one of the knots which bound the time of which we are treating to the Middle Age; in the baptistery of Ravenna, for instance, the Jordan was represented after the pagan fashion, under the form of a river-god, crowned with marine plants, and leaning upon his urn, whence the streams gushed forth which formed the sacred wave in which the Redeemer was plunged. This imitation was so inveterate that it was ceaselessly reproduced. At Venice, again, the four Evangelists were accompanied by the four rivers of the terrestrial paradise, to which they answered in the symbolical language of the Church, the streams being

here also covered with seaweed and leaning upon their urns. Charlemagne was scandalized at this, and lamented in the Caroline works that in the midst of the sacred pictures rivers had been represented under pagan emblems; but Charlemagne could not get rid of them, and we may still, in the cathedral of Autun and the church of Vézélay, see the streams of the earthly paradise depicted under the form of classic deities supported on their recumbent urns.

But painting and sculpture were still only subsidiary to architecture, which, in primitive ages, is always the dominant art. And, in fact, to tell the truth, these bas-reliefs, frescoes, and mosaics could only form the monumental accessories of an edifice which would be capable of sustaining and grouping them into a system which would have a precise and extensive meaning, and would afford them the means of truly instructing and touching the hearts of men. This is hardly the place in which to unfold the history of Christian architecture from its rise in the Catacombs, or to trace out exhaustively the first origin of the basilicas. We may shortly state, however, that that origin seems to have been of a double nature. On the one hand, the first churches seem to have been nothing but a development, and, if we may so express it, a germination of the sepulchral chapels of the Catacombs. Those chapels were square, or round, or polygonal, and nearly always terminated by a vault surmounted by a dome. Gradually they were divided into four compartments. When the persecuted Christians, those glorious members of the Church, escaped from their obscurity, it seemed as if their sepulchres burst through the earth, raised themselves over it, and formed its crown; for the first

chapels, the first Christian tombs, and the first baptisteries which were constructed upon the face of the earth, instead of being hidden within its depths, all affected that form. The baptisteries were round, and so were the first Christian burial-places, as, for instance, the baptistery of St. John Lateran at Rome, the tomb of St. Constance, also at Rome, built by Constantine for his sister and other illustrious members of his family, and we may also cite the cathedral of Brescia, which is a rotunda. In the East, that form was destined to prevail and to form the cupola; for already the Church of the Holy Apostles, constructed by Constantine, showed a cupola crowning the intersection of a Greek cross. In the case of St. Sophia, the cupola was developed still more, until it extended on every side, and, in some measure, absorbed the limbs of the cross, thus forming the special Byzantine type which was to remain peculiar to the East.

But another and not less incontestable origin was that derived from the use made by the Christians of the old Roman basilicas. Athens had possessed a portico, named the Kingly Porch, which had served for the audiences of the archon king, and Rome had imitated this architecture. In the arcades wherein justice was administered was comprised a building styled a basilica. This was a vast palace, divided into three naves by colonnades placed tier upon tier, and at the end was the tribunal occupied by the judge and his assessors. When Christianity had expanded and grown powerful, it did not desire to borrow from antiquity its temples, for they were too small; but it borrowed its basilicas. It is thus that the churches of Tyre and Jerusalem, of which we have the description; those of St. Peter and

St. John Lateran, built by Constantine; that of St. Paul, founded by Theodosius; and, lastly, the Basilica of Nola, of which St. Paulinus has given us an account, were all constructed.

But we do not exactly understand all that was signified by a church in these early Christian ages. It was not simply a place to which a hasty visit of a half hour was made once a week for the accomplishment of a pious duty. The church was bound to embrace every portion of the Christian society, and to be the image and representation of the universal Church of the earth in its whole hierarchy from the bishop to the humblest penitent. Thus the bishop's throne was placed in the apse; around it were ranged the benches of his clergy, to right and left; separated in the two naves, lying north and south, were the men and women, who were admitted to participation in the mysteries; at the extreme end of the principal nave was the place for the catechumens and some of the penitents; and, lastly, in the atrium, the vestibule, and the arcaded court which separated the church from the street, were stationed the penitents of lower degree, and another portion of the catechumens. Thus all in their previously assigned positions occupied a similar place in the sacred building to that which they filled in the designs of Providence. Moreover, the Church was bound to instruct men and to attract them, that they might go forth informed and touched, desirous too of returning as to a place in which they had found truth, goodness, and beauty. Accordingly the church was covered with symbolical pictures, with lessons written beneath them in verse; every wall spoke, as in the case of the beautiful frescoes which we have seen painted on those of St.

Germain des Prés, and there was no stone there which had not something to teach to mankind. So with that mingling of architecture, of painting, and of inscriptions, multiplied occasionally to such an extent that in St. Mark, at Venice, there is a whole poem of two hundred and fifty verses on the walls. The church contained a theology, a rule, and a sacred poem. It was after this manner that the basilica of the first Christian ages was conceived, and it was thus that it was repeated and reproduced until it became the dominant system of the West.

Nevertheless the East and the West were not without connection, and during the whole period which separated Charlemagne and Constantine, there was no breach between these rival and often jealous sections of the Church. Hence we find many mutual exchanges and adaptations; the Byzantine cupola invaded the West and was annexed in Northern Italy to the ordinary type of the Roman basilicas. The style thus formed, which has been named Romanesque, Lombard, and inaccurately Byzantine, was continued on the banks of the Rhine, and still shows excellent specimens at Spires, Worms, Mayence, and Cologne. Those fine churches of the tenth and eleventh centuries confound us by their grandeur and solemnity. Their form was always that of the Roman basilica, with its body divided into three naves, but with the cupola crowning the centre of the cross, and sometimes the apse itself.

Lastly came the Gothic period, having less to effect than has been supposed, for the Romano-Byzantine architecture had already pushed farther and raised higher than had been dared by the contemporaries of

Constantine and Theodosius, every portion of the sacred building, especially in those great buildings of the Rhineland, with their infinite wealth of detail, their belfries which rose towards heaven on every side, and their towers which seemed to defy all that antiquity had told of the giants. Gothic architecture was destined to a last effort, like one rising from the dead who would strive to raise the lid of his sepulchre and end by breaking it. So the Gothic, in labouring to raise the Byzantine arch, broke it in the midst, and the pointed style was formed. With it broke forth that architectural system whose marvels mayhap are yet neither known nor admired enough; for although Rheims and Chartres are at our sides, we seem to ignore them. We now go to the Parthenon and say that we have never seen the like; whereas marvels of a different grandeur and variety, and equally immortal, lie around us. However, this Gothic architecture was still only the development of the Christian basilica as it had been moulded in the fifth century; and a near inspection will show the same disposition and the recurring idea of the keel (*navis*) of the vessel; and, in fact, this nave and this vessel imitated the ark of Noah, of which the Scripture spoke. But the arch of the thirteenth century has so extended the cross that it was necessary to support it by buttresses—things unknown to the ancients. Their weight was concealed by their number; they were multiplied, lightened, and diminished, until they appeared as so many cables extended to bind to the earth the heavenly bark, which otherwise would escape, sail away, and disappear.

Such was the origin of the Gothic architecture, and it points also to the origin of the Revival; but we see

that the Revival preferred the rounder form and the cupola which was so dear to the Byzantines. The new St. Peter's, which was then reared upon the ruins of the older church, was but another mighty effort to raise still higher into the air the dome which already swelled over St. Sophia, St. Vitalis at Ravenna, and St. Mark at Venice; only the new shrine was to be greater and vaster than had ever been seen. It was to soar higher than had ever been reached; for beneath it was a generating tomb—one of those burial-places that are always full of life; one of those germs that are ever shooting forth—and which, beneath the obscure basilica which had veiled it, had laboured ceaselessly to shape the walls which it found too strait. Above it now is suspended the loftiest dome that has ever been built, nearly equalling the height of Egypt's greatest pyramid, which is, after all, but a masterpiece of materialism, a mass of piled up masonry; whereas great waves of light and life ebb and flow beneath the arches of St. Peter's. Its stones are instinct with spirit, and, borne into the air by the hands of faith, they command the neighbouring mountains. You start from the lowest step of the basilica and your view is cramped; you mount the endless stairs, and, at last, above the church and its cupola, you find the platform and see from thence the hills sink down and disappear on the plain; and over them you may perceive the sea, a sight never gazed upon by Romans in their triumphs from the heights of the Capitol.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MATERIAL CIVILIZATION OF THE EMPIRE.

We know how the ideas which formed the spirit of the Roman civilization escaped the ruin of the Empire, traversed the barbaric period, and descended to the mediæval epoch, of which they became at one time the beacon light, at another the scandal. We have also noticed the marvel of wisdom and accommodation by which Christianity saved the feeble remnants of the ancient worship, the greater part of literature, and the whole legal system. Meanwhile, however, the baneful influences of Paganism subsisted in the popular superstitions and occult sciences, in the policy of the princes who busied themselves in reconstructing the absolutism of the Cæsars in their own interests, and those mythological fables which were ever relished, and which tended to propagate the poison of the ancient licentiousness. Thus were perpetuated the two traditions of good and evil; thus a double bond linked the ages which history has vainly separated; and thus was strengthened that wholesome but terrible law of reversibility which causes us to reap the fruit of the merits of our forefathers and to bear the burden of their faults.

But beneath the current of ideas which dispute the empire of the world lies that world itself such as labour

has made it, with that treasure of wealth and visible adornment which render it worthy of being the transient sojourn-place of immortal souls. Beneath the true, the good, and the beautiful, lies the useful, which is brightened by their reflection. No people has ever more keenly appreciated the idea of utility than that of Rome; none has ever laid upon the earth a hand more full of power, or more capable of transforming it, nor more profusely flung the treasures of earth at the feet of humanity. So we must also closely examine what may be styled the material civilization of the Empire, that we may know whether it also perished entirely at the time of the invasions, or, if not, how much of it was stored up for the ages to come.

At the close of the second century, before the barbarians had carried fire and sword across the frontiers, the rhetorician Aristides celebrated, in the following terms, the greatness of the Roman Empire:—"Romans, the whole world beneath your dominion seems to be keeping a day of festival. From time to time a sound of battle comes to you from the ends of the earth, where you are repelling the Goth, the Moor, or the Arab. But soon that sound is dispersed like a dream. Other are the rivalries and different the conflicts which you excite throughout the universe. They are combats of glory, rivalries in magnificence between provinces and cities. Through you gymnasia, aqueducts, porticoes, temples, and schools are multiplied; the very soil revives, and earth is but one vast garden."* Similar also was the language of the stern Tertullian:—"In truth, the world becomes day by da

* Aristides, Romæ Encomium, oratio xiv.

richer and more cultivated; even the islands are no longer solitudes, the rocks have no more terrors for the navigator; everywhere there are habitations, population, law, and life." In fact, we are at once struck by the life which animated every quarter of the Empire, and, therefore, every corner of the world; life which was sustained by commerce, the greatness of which lies in its faculty of thus carrying the sovereignty of man over every sea and every land. The trade of Rome flowed necessarily towards the East and the North, and in the East she had inherited the ideas as well as the conquests of Alexander. The Greeks had penetrated Asia by two great routes—one by land, the other by sea; the first led by the colonies on the Euxine, the Tauric Chersonese, Olbia, and Theodosia. From these places, and from Armenia, they reached Media, Hyrcania, and Bactriana, in which last a Grecian dynasty had sustained itself for a thousand years; and then, traversing the passes of the Imaus, gained Little Bokhara, about the ninety-sixth degree of longitude. Here there was a caravanserai of stone, and to it the Seri brought their silks, furs, and steel in bales, on which the price was marked, deposited them, and departed. The buyers then came, examined the merchandise, and, if it suited them, left the value which the Seri had put upon it. The latter then returned, and, if satisfied with the bargain, they left their goods, and carried off the price. It took the Seri seven months' march, according to Pomponius Mela,* to reach their native country of Eastern Thibet, and those dearly-purchased stuffs were handed over to

* Hullmann Handelsgeschichte der Griechen.

workwomen, who unwove them in order to give them a finer texture: *ut matronæ publice transluceant.**

The principal sea route open to ancient commerce was that by Alexandria. Ptolemy Philadelphus had formed ports upon the Red Sea, and under the Romans 120 ships sailed yearly from Myos Amos, weighing anchor generally at the island of Pattala, at the mouth of the Indus, though a small number pushed their enterprise to the port of Palibothra, at the mouth of the Ganges. They kept close to the shore of the mainland and of the island of Ceylon. The vessels employed in the commerce of the Indus carried there fifty million sesterces every year, but the merchandise they brought back sold for a hundred times as much. It comprised silk, cotton, colouring materials, pearls and jewels, ivory, steel of superior quality, lions, leopards, panthers, and slaves, all this mass of wealth being disembarked at Puteoli.

To the North, however, every facility for trade was the creation of Rome herself. Her legions had constructed the roads which furrowed mountains, leaped over marshes, and crossed so many different provinces with a like solidity, regularity, and uniformity, and the various races were lost in admiration at the mighty works which were attributed in after times to Cæsar, to Brunehaut, or to Abelard. There were two routes from Rome to the Danube, one by Aquileium and Lauriacum, another by Verona and Augsburg. Another way ran from the Black Sea along the course of that river and joined Vienna, Passau, Ratisbon, Augsburg, Winterthur, Basle, Strasburg, Bonn, Cologne, Leyden,

* A native of Cos, named Pamphila, had first conceived the idea of unravelling silk stuffs in order to reweave them.

and Utrecht. The Rhine and the Meuse were linked by a canal; another was destined to reach the Saône, and thus the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Baltic were brought into communication. Beyond, again, lay conquered Britain, divided into five provinces and covered with a network of roads, which ended at the wall of Hadrian. From these northern regions the Roman merchants gained tin, amber, rich furs, and the fair tresses which adorned the heads of patrician matrons. But at length the barbarians came down over all this, and it seemed as if the links which bound the world were snapping. However, a connection was maintained between Italy and Constantinople. The capital of the Eastern Empire formed a place of refuge for the Frankish kings whom their subjects had rejected, or for the chiefs who were persecuted by the kings. Childeric, Gondowald, Gontran Duke of Auvergne found a retreat there;* and on the other hand Syrians were found at Orleans,† and a Syrian named Eusebius even purchased the episcopal see of Paris.‡ Moreover, the luxury which Roman commerce had produced was not unknown to the West in the Carlovingian period. The Franks found at Pavia silk clothes of every colour, and foreign furs of all sorts, brought thither by the merchants of Venice from the treasures of the East, and the following anecdote,

* Histoire de la Gaule Meridionale (Fauriel); Recits Merovingiens (Augustine Thierry).

† Gregory of Tours, in describing the solemn entry of King Gontran into Orleans, says, "Et hinc lingua Syrorum, hinc Latinorum, hinc etiam ipsorum Judæorum in diversis laudibus varie concrepabunt," lib. viii. 1.

‡ Raguemodus quoque Parisæcæ urbis episcopus obiit, Eusebius quidam negotiator genere Syrus, datis multis muneribus in locum ejus subrogatus est.—*Greg. Turon.* x. 26.

related by the monk of St. Gall, shows that Oriental garments were in fashion even at the court of Charlemagne. "On a certain feast day after mass, Charles took his chief courtiers out hunting. The day was cold and rainy, and the emperor wore a sheepskin coat; but the courtiers who had just come from Pavia, whither the Venetians had recently brought all the riches of the Orient from countries beyond the sea, were clad, after their fashion on holy days, in robes covered with the feathers of Phœnician birds, trimmed with silk and the downy feathers of the neck and tail of the peacock, and adorned with Tyrian purple and fringes of cedar bark; upon some shone embroidered stuffs, upon others the fur of dormice. In this array they rode through the woods, and so they returned torn by the branches of trees, thorns, and brambles, drenched with rain, and stained with the blood of wild beasts and the exhalations from their hides. 'Let none of us,' said the mischievous Charles, 'change our clothes until the time of going to rest, for they will dry quicker upon us.' Immediately every one became more occupied with the body than its covering, and looked about for a fire at which to get warm. But in the evening, when they began to doff the fine furs and delicate stuffs which had shrivelled and shrunk at the fire, these fell to pieces with a sound like the breaking of dry sticks. The poor wretches groaned and lamented at having lost so much money in a single day. But they had been ordered by the emperor to present themselves before him on the following day in the same apparel. They did so; but all, instead of making a brilliant show in their fine new clothes, caused disgust at their dirty and colourless rags. Thereupon Charles said to his groom of the

chamber with some irony, 'Just rub my coat a little with your hands, and bring it back to me.' Then taking in his hands the garment which had been brought back to him clean and whole, and showing it to the bystanders, he exclaimed, 'O most foolish of men, which of us now has the most precious and useful attire? Is it mine, which I bought for a single penny, or yours, which has cost you not only pounds, but even talents of silver?' "*

Thus was the tradition of commerce handed down to the Middle Age, when the Church, far from declaring herself hostile, became eminently its protectress. Her councils condemned piracy, and by the mouths of her pontiffs, Gregory VII., Pascal II., Honorius II., and Alexander III., she pronounced against the right of shipwreck. Innocent III., again, obliged a Seigneur de Montfort, who had pillaged some Italian merchantmen, to make restitution. But she more especially infused fresh energy into commerce by her pilgrimages and crusades. The former were frequent in the barbaric times, and the inhabitants of the commercial town of Amalfi possessed a benefice at Jerusalem. The Crusades had the double effect of drawing the population of France and Germany along the route of the Danube, and of launching on the sea the vessels of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice. Genoa and Venice succeeded to the Oriental commerce of Greece and Rome,† and conducted it along the same channels. Their route to the North was by way of Caffa and Tana, upon the Black Sea, from whence the caravans reached Ispahan, Balk, and

* Mon. St. Gall. lib. ii. xxvii.

† Bettinelli, Risorgimento d'Italia, t. iv.; Heeren, Essai sur l'Influence des Croisades.

Bokhara; whilst the way to the South lay by Alexandria, where were stored the cargoes from India. But Christian proselytism was destined to surmount the barriers at which the cupidity of Rome had paused. The mission of Carpinus was to pave the way for the researches of Marco Polo, and Christopher Columbus was to discover America, whilst striving to place the wealth of Asia at the service of a new crusade.

Rome owed the methods by which she gathered in the fruits of the earth to herself alone. Agriculture was indeed the glory of a people which took its dictators from the plough, and whose greatest poem, the "Georgics," was the epopee of the fields. We must not confound that admirable work with the didactic poetry of the literature of the Decline, for it was due to an entirely new inspiration, and Virgil, in the place of a golden era, sang of an age of iron:—

> Labor omnia vincit
> Improbus, et duris urgens in rebus egestas;

And caused the genius of his country to pass into his verses—

> Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,
> Hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria crevit,
> Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

Moreover, the agricultural system, which was their boast at home, was carried by the Romans to the end of that world which the issue of their conflicts had given them: *Romanus sedendo vincit.* In their eyes the frontiers of the Empire were deemed more efficiently protected by a line of harvests than by a wall of stone. Accordingly, military colonies were established by Trajan among the Dacians; by Alexander Severus,

Probus, and Valentinian on the German frontier; all of which were provided with cattle and slaves, and exempted from the tribute. Thus the crops which seemed destined to tempt the barbarians really served to ward them off. Roman establishments were placed on the northern coasts of Gaul and on the remotest promontories of Finisterre, and Germany bears witness still to the agriculture of the Empire in the form of the plough now used by the peasantry of Baden, and in the vineyards first planted by Probus on the hills that overhang the Rhine.

Yet it was Rome herself, through the detestable fiscal system of the emperors and the opulence of the aristocracy, that first sapped the foundations of this magnificent system. The immense domains (*latifundia perdidere Italiam*), entirely abandoned to slaves on the one hand and the exactions of the tribute on the other, were alike fatal to it. The peasant properly so called passed over to the Bagaudes and the barbarians. At length the Northern hordes swept down upon the Empire; half or two-thirds of the land was demanded by the invaders; but they still retained the Roman *coloni*.

Legions of volunteers, however, were formed as time went on, to assist these cultivators in their forced labour. A young man of Latium, named Benedictus, had rallied a certain number of Christians round him, and imposed upon them a rule comprising poverty, chastity, and obedience. These three virtues were placed under the protection of labour, and six hours of manual toil were exacted day by day. One day he embraced his disciple Maurus, and, giving him a certain measure of bread and wine, sent him forth to extend

the system to Gaul. Such was the origin of those monastic colonies whose mission was to push the work of clearing and civilizing into the marshes of Flanders and the depths of the Black Forest, and enlarge the limit of cultivation to the Baltic Sea. Thus the traditions of Rome did not perish, and agriculture, like civilization, generally flourished again under Charlemagne. The following extract, from the "Capitularies," shows the care of that great monarch for husbandry, and its satisfactory condition during his reign:—"We desire that our serfs should be kept in good estate, and that no one should reduce them to poverty; that none of our officers should presume to attach them to their service, to impose forced labour upon them, nor receive from them any gift—neither a horse, an ox, a sheep, a lamb, nor anything but fruits, fowls, and eggs. When the duty of carrying out any work upon our lands falls upon any of our officers, either the ploughing, sowing, reaping, or gathering the vintage, let each of them provide for everything in its proper season, that it all may be done in order. Let them carefully train the vines committed to their charge; let the wine be put into well-seasoned vessels, and let them be careful that nothing be lost. In proportion to the number of farms under the supervision of an intendant shall be the number of men allotted to him to tend the bees. The yards of our chief farms must never produce less than a hundred fowls and thirty geese; and the smaller ones shall nourish, at least, twelve geese and fifty chickens. Let the utmost care be taken that all the produce of our farms—lard, dried meats, wine, beer, butter, cheese, honey, wax, and flour, are prepared with the greatest cleanliness. We also desire that every kind of plant

should be cultivated in our gardens, namely, lilies, roses, sage, cucumber, melon, pumpkin, pea, bean, fennel, lettuce, rosemary, mint, poppy, and mallow." * We do not smile at the sight of a great mind thus stooping to details; for it is a true mark of genius to embrace the small things which mediocrity despises, as the Almighty Himself gives laws to the stars without forgetting the grain of dust, or the hyssop, smallest of plants. Charlemagne counted his chickens as he scolded the choristers of his chapel or the children in his palace school, and it was thus that he was instrumental in re-establishing both the culture of the fields and the culture of letters.

The face of the earth was transformed by the foundation of cities, which shelter and develop social life. Rome, as a city which had conquered the world, thought that her surest method of preserving her dominion was by covering it with towns like herself. Wherever her legions travelled, they bore with them an emblem of the mother city, *quasi muratam civitatem*. The camp was in fact a military city, and the Roman idea of a town was but an expansion of the permanent camp with its square area, four gates, two intersecting streets, and the prætorium or palace in the midst. There was, moreover, no method by which the soil could be more thoroughly taken in possession than by thus inclosing its space, in forcing its waters to flow through aqueducts, and its stones to rise in porticoes and form temples, thermæ, and amphitheatres. The Empire became, therefore, a network of towns, and the itineraries mention one hundred and sixteen in Germany alone. Britain numbered thirty-eight, and

* Capit. de Villis. v. 812.

Bath and Caerleon amongst them contained theatres, palaces, and magnificent baths. Dorchester possessed an amphitheatre, and St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, in London, occupy respectively the sites of temples of Apollo and Diana. To these multitudinous and magnificent centres of civilization the invasion of the barbarians was at first most fatal. It was at the outset furious and implacable in character, and Gildas describes how the whole island of Britain was ravaged by fire and sword, and how solid buildings fell on every side beneath the blows of battering rams. The Gothic provinces were invaded by the Suevi, the Alans, and the Vandals; and Spires, Strasburg, Reims, and Mayence fell into heaps of ruins under their hands. The imperial city of Trèves, so long the abode of the Court, where the splendours of the banks of the Tiber had been in some measure reproduced on those of the Moselle, became a mere sepulchre. Still greater was the ruin in Italy, and the queen-city of the world was made over to the soldiers of Alaric, who devoted two long days to its pillage. The gardens of Sallust were devoured by flames, and the golden tiles of the Capitol and the bronze plates of the Pantheon were torn off by the invaders.

But when their first fury had passed, the barbarians were touched by the majesty of Rome, and laboured to preserve their edifices. They desired to restore what they had injured, to study the models which they had never surpassed; and the following letter from Cassiodorus to the Prefect of Rome on the subject of an architect for the public buildings shows the sincerity of this conservative feeling:—"It is fit," he says, "that the beauty of the Roman monuments should be skil-

fully guarded, that the admirable thickness of our walls should be preserved by strict diligence. Let your greatness know, therefore, that we have appointed an architect for the buildings of Rome. He will behold works more beautiful than any he has found in books or conceived in thought, statues which still bear the living features of famous men. He will see veins running, muscles strained, and nerves stretched in bronze. He will admire the horses of iron foaming impetuously beneath the motionless metal. What shall be said of columns which shoot forth like reeds; of the lofty constructions which are borne up by light supports; or of those marbles which are so skilfully joined that nature seemed to have cast them in a single piece? The historian of the ages that are passed did but number seven wonders of the world, but who that has seen so many surprising things in a single city can henceforth hold them as marvellous? It will be merely true if it is said that Rome is one great miracle."* The Frankish kings adopted the same policy of reparation, and we find them inhabiting the palace of Julian, whilst Chilperic rebuilt the ruins of Soissons.

But there were other forces at work which prevented the decay of the cities. In the first place their interests were defended by their bishops, who became of great importance in the barbaric period, both from their generally superior culture, and from their using their substantial but ill-defined temporal authority to improve the condition of their episcopal towns. In many cases also respect for the saint who reposed in the cathedral procured immunities. St. Martin became

* Cassiod. Variorum, vii. 15; Formula ad præfectum urbis de architecto publicorum.

the protector of Tours, St. Aignan of Orleans, and St. Hilary of Poitiers. The Church, in her capacity of a civilizing agency, not only preserved but constructed cities; and her abbeys, as in the case of St. Gall, became germs of new towns to which they gave a name. These cities remained also the cradles of industry. Rome had possessed the nine corporations of Numa and colleges of workmen under the emperors, and there were traces of the system during the barbaric period. The history of St. Eloi, his apprenticeship to Abbon, the overseer of the royal mint at Limoges, and his subsequent career at Paris, shows us the Christian workman with his labour transformed and sanctified by religion. We find the workmen among the Franks and Saxons beguiling their toil by singing psalms, and the spirit of piety and brotherhood at last issued in the labour confraternities of the Middle Age. These organizations became a considerable power; throughout France they effected the emancipation of the commons, and in Italy they formed the sinews of the sturdy republics of Lombardy. Labour again was of the essence of the Florentine constitution, and no one could be counted among the citizens until he had been enrolled in one of the twelve arts. Nor did this empire of industry crush the æsthetic sentiment. Far from it; for companies of workmen raised the Duomo of Florence and the church of Or San Michele, and it was for them that the arcades of the old palace were covered by Giotto with his frescoes.

It only remains to us to notice briefly the difference between the cities of Paganism and of Christendom. Christianity had so to speak recovered the true life and

affections of humanity. Every man had before been turned as it were to the outer world, had passed his life on the public square, or received his friends and clients in his richly adorned *atrium*, whilst the narrow chambers which opened upon the portico had been thought good enough for the women, children, and slaves. But Christianity had turned the heart of man inwards, had given him the family life, and caused him to find his happiness within his house; so he left it as little as possible, and loved to embellish the spot in which his days were passed in the company of his wife and children with woodwork, tapestry, rich furniture, and skilfully graven plate. Yet the Church preserved the old type of house, but only in her monasteries, where the time was passed in prayer or labour, and it was not needed that the cell should be home-like. Modern towns indeed seem at first sight far inferior to the cities of antiquity. Look for instance at Pompeii, a city of the third order, with its colonnades, porticoes, thermæ, theatres, and circus. The pagan city had small temples and gigantic amphitheatres, whilst the Christian town was grouped around its cathedral, and had its hospital and school. The ancients, without question, understood the art of enjoyment far better than ourselves, and we must despair of ever rivalling their pleasure-adapted cities, for our own are built for labour, for suffering, and for prayer, and in this fact does their greatness consist.

[The preceding chapter, which was never completed, is published merely in the shape of rough notes in the French edition. It has been thought better to work it up here into a connected form.—*Tr.*]

CHAPTER X.

THE RISE OF THE NEO-LATIN NATIONS.

We have hitherto studied only that uniform civilization which in the fifth century extended from one end of the Western Empire to the other. Two principles were at issue within it, Paganism and Christianity, but without any distinction of place, under the empire of a common legislation and a common language. Whilst Virgil was solemnly read in the Forum of Trajan at Rome, the grammarians were discussing his works with the utmost zeal in the schools of York, Toulouse, and Cordova. If St. Augustine, from his retreat at Hippo, dictated a new treatise against the heresies of his time, all the Churches of Italy, of the Gauls, and of Spain listened with attention. Thus at first sight we can only discover one sole Latin literature, which, so to speak, began the education of all the races of the West; a teaching which was to be continued through the barbarous epoch far forward into the Middle Age, until the unity of the Christian society was formed. Yet gradually we perceive differences of genius piercing through the apparent community of the literary tradition. Amongst the crowd of nations subject to the domination of Rome, was there not one which had preserved some remnant of its original character? Could one not discover in their laws, their

manners, their dialects, and even in the works of their writers, some distinctive features, some inveterate instincts, some irresistible vocation towards the part which Providence intends them to perform in later times, and which was to constitute their nationality? This is the question which remains for our discussion.

It has been customary to date the modern nationalities from the invasion of the barbarians and the establishment of the German chiefs in the different provinces of the West. Thus the history of the Franks is made to commence with Clovis, the history of Spain with Wamba, and that of Italy with Odoacer. The history of language has been treated in a similar way to that of nations; and it is to the confusion of the Germanic idioms with the Latin tongue—idioms which, it is said, presented analytical forms, possessed articles, and employed prepositions—that the origin of the languages which were destined to become those of modern Europe has been attributed. We shall separate, in the first place, those countries in which the Germanic wave submerged everything; as, for instance, England, where the British population was driven back to make place for the new Anglo-Saxon race which mastered the soil and imprinted on it the indelible and characteristic mark of language; and, again, Southern Germany, as Rhætia and Noricum, formerly subject to the Roman civilization, which almost entirely disappeared before the invasion of the Herulan, Lombard, and Vandal races which filled those countries, and handed them down to their descendants. But it was far different in the case of those three great countries, Italy, France, and Spain, over which the barbarians only passed, like the waves of the Nile, to fertilize the

land; and it is in them that we may seek to trace out the first features of the national genius, before even the barbaric invasion, and before that mingling of idioms to the intervention of which the birth of the modern languages has for long, but erroneously, been exclusively attributed.

We must here consider those general causes which could preserve a national spirit in each of the great Roman provinces. They are three in number, namely, a political cause; another, which may be called a literary cause; and, lastly, a cause arising from religion. Rome never professed any great respect for her conquered nationalities. She often outraged them; but, in the wisdom of her policy, never more than was necessary for the interests of her domination. She left a shadow of autonomy to the cities of Italy and the great towns of the East and of Greece, and permitted a kind of bond to subsist between the populations of Gaul and Spain. In that organization of the Empire of the West which resulted from the decrees of Diocletian and Maximian, each of the three great dioceses, Italy, Gaul, and Spain, was presided over by a vicar charged to govern and to administer it. This vicar was generally surrounded by a council composed of the notable inhabitants of the province, and thence it followed that each province had, as it were, its representation to defend its own interests and make known its wants; and from that diversity of interests, wants, and resources, resulted the very wealth of the Empire; for every province supplied what was wanting to the others, and thus became an ornament of that mighty Roman society of the time of the Cæsars. So true was it that the Roman world derived a certain beauty and grandeur

from the very variety which was produced in the midst of its uniformity, that Claudian, the poet of the Decline, in a composition in praise of Stilicho, represented the different provinces of the Empire gathering round the goddess Rome and demanding her aid. They were all personified with their attributes, the expressions of the respective genius of each. Thus Spain, then so peaceful, appeared crowned with branches of olive, and bearing upon her garment the gold of the Tagus; Africa, burnt brown by the sun, had her brow bound with the wheat-ears which she poured into the lap of Rome, as being the feeder of the Roman Empire, and was crowned with a diadem of ivory; Gaul, always warlike, proudly tossed her hair and balanced two darts in her hand; whilst Britain came last, having her cheeks tatooed, her head covered with the hide of a sea-monster, and her shoulders with a long mantle of azure, which imitated, by its flowing folds, the waves of the ocean, as if the poet foresaw that this Britain, then so barbarous, was destined one day to the empire of the seas.

Thus diversity prevailed even in the order which Rome had established in the government of her provinces. And this feature was far more strongly pronounced in the obstinate resistance opposed by these provinces to the Roman administration. In fact, the power of Rome was not established and maintained without much resistance, much passion, and much rebellion. To the horrors of conquest succeeded all the injustice of exaction and all the persecutions of the tribute. In every province, side by side with the prefect, who was at the head of the civil government, stood the proctor of Cæsar, charged with the financial admi-

nistration. At the mere sight of the lictors of the latter, the inhabitants of the country took to flight and the houses of the city were closed; for the Roman fisc was insatiable in its demands. It claimed, firstly, the capitation, which was a personal impost, and the indiction, a tax upon property; and then, in extraordinary cases, the superindiction, or extraordinary impost; then the chrysargyrum, or charge upon industry; lastly, upon the succession of the emperor, the crown tax; which was a gratuitous gift which no one could withhold with impunity. Moreover, these repeated taxes were levied with a cruelty and severity to which contemporary historians bear witness. The tax-gatherers, or comptrollers of the fisc, were spread throughout the rural districts, and in order to evince their zeal and increase their profits, entered the house and made children older and old men younger, that they might bring them upon their lists in the category of those between fifteen and sixty, on whom the payment of the impost was obligatory. When the value of any fortune was hard to discover, they put slaves, wives, and children to the torture, in order to extract the real extent of wealth owned by the father of the family. It could hardly be expected that the provinces should submit with good grace to such unheard-of persecutions; but it was in vain that Constantine issued edicts to stop the cruelties of the fiscal agents, which were pushed to such an extent that after his time the inhabitants of certain provinces emigrated into the territory of the barbarians, that they might find under the shelter of the German tents a life less miserable than that which Rome meted out to them under the roofs of their fathers.

At length this profound and bitter hatred broke forth

in the words and writings of the eminent men of each province. We have already remarked the existence of an African party in Africa, and perceived the reawakening there of the old spirit of Carthage. This faction had raised a marble tomb to Hannibal, and from his ashes were the avengers to arise who, in their turn, were to go forth and punish Rome, when Genseric weighed anchor in the harbour of Carthage and proceeded to hold to ransom the once proud but now fallen capital. In the meanwhile the African spirit loved to dwell upon its grievances, and it had found in St. Augustine an eloquent interpreter. In spite of the deep charity of that great man, and the love which he extended to Rome, in common with the rest of the universe, the ancient African patriotism showed itself in him frequently; as, for instance, when he reproached Maximus of Medaura for having made a laughing-stock of those African names which were after all those of his maternal language. "You cannot," said he, "be so forgetful of your origin that, though born in Africa and writing for Africans, yet, in contempt of the natal land in which we both were raised, you should proscribe the use of Punic names."

We have seen the same spirit throughout that bold chapter of the "City of God," in which St. Augustine dared to reproach Rome with the glory which was stained with blood and crime, and dashed by weakness and disgrace, and have heard the murmurs which arose around his pulpit when he ascended it to tell of the fall of Rome and her capture by Alaric. "Above all," said many of his audience, "let him not speak of Rome, nor say anything on the subject." And he was obliged

to enter upon the easy task of defending and justifying himself. So true was it that Africa then contained two parties, one in favour of Rome, and another to which St. Augustine was impelled by his patriotic zeal, and this point, which we seem to have been the first to insist upon, has never at least been gainsaid.

In Spain, a similar spirit was manifested in the works of the priest Paulus Orosius. After pointing to the conquests and the grandeur of Rome, he demanded an account of the tears and blood which they had cost. And in those days of supreme felicity for the Roman people, when their triumphant leaders mounted the Capitol, followed by many captives from many nations chained one to another, "how many provinces," said he, "were then lamenting their defeat, their humiliation, and their servitude! Let Spain say what she thinks of it. Spain, who for two ages watered her fields with her own blood, being at once incapable of repulsing or of bearing with that inveterate foe. Then when hunted from city to city, worn out by hunger and decimated by the sword, the last and miserable effort of her warriors was spent, firstly in massacring their wives and children, and then in mutual slaughter."*

The resentment of Saguntum when abandoned by the Romans and obliged to bury itself beneath its ruins, lived again in the bitter words and implacable reproaches of this priestly writer. And if the bands of the Empire were nearly breaking from the very violence with which they had been strained, if political causes were also at work in producing and nourishing a spirit of opposition and isolation in each of the different provinces, we must also recognize the fact that the diversity

* Paul. Oros. lib. v. c. 1.

of their languages also contributed to the same end. Nothing seems more feeble than a language, nothing less formidable to a conqueror than a certain number of obscure words, an unintelligible dialect preserved by a vanquished race. Yet a force lies within those words which skilful conquerors and intelligent despots well understand, and in which they will never let themselves be deceived. We need only point in proof to those who in our own days are suppressing a national idiom and imposing Russ as an obligatory language in the very place in which it has met with an invincible resistance. The Romans likewise had encountered dialects which resisted the sword, and over which the prefect of the province or the proctor of the fisc could exercise no coercion. The Latin tongue was, doubtless, propagated early in many of the countries which the Roman conquest had invaded, as for instance in Narbonensis, in Southern Spain. But the Latin which was established there was the popular idiom spoken by the veteran soldiers who were despatched to the colonies. It soon became corrupted through the fusion of races by mingling with local dialects, and was formed into so many particular idioms, the popular Latin of Gaul being different from that which prevailed beyond the Pyrenees. Moreover, the older languages did not give way, and the Greek survived in the southern provinces of Italy into the heart of the Middle Age. Many districts, entirely Greek in their character, existed in the kingdom of Naples as late as the fifteenth century. In Northern Italy, again, the language of the Ligurians, the inhabitants of the mountains of Genoa, was preserved until the fall of the Empire; whilst the Etruscan still lingered in the times of Aulus Gellius, and was not

without effect upon the Latin which was spoken in the neighbouring towns. Moreover, the ancient inscriptions found in the Italic towns are often tainted with that corruption from which the Italian language was one day to proceed. In them were already to be found such entirely modern forms as *cinque, nove, sedice mese,* or such new words as *bramosus* for *cupidus; testa* for *caput; brodium* for *jus.* The declension of words also had completely disappeared, and it was only by the aid of particles that their functions could be determined.

In Gaul, the Celtic language lasted into the fifth century, and St. Jerome heard it still spoken at Trèves. In Spain, the old Iberian tongue disputed the ground as it were foot by foot, fell back towards the mountains, within the limits of which it was at last confined, and became the Basque language still spoken there in our own days, and which has left no less than one thousand nine hundred words in modern Spanish. Such then is the resistance which a language is capable of offering. But what influence is that which bestows so much power upon those syllables, which in themselves might seem so ill adapted to neutralize the effects of a conquest? It is derived from the thoughts, feelings, and recollections which they arouse in man; it is from their containing the sentiments which are most deeply rooted in his heart, from their power of recalling the usages amidst which he was born, the affections in which he has grown and lived. A well-made language—and all languages are well formed when they are developed by themselves and without foreign influences—is but the natural product of that soil which has seen its rise, and of the heaven

which has shone upon its birth; it is in some measure the very type of fatherland, and therefore as long as its language subsists, the time has not come to despair of a nation.

In the third place, religion itself, that power which seemed destined to bring about unity everywhere, contributed nevertheless to the preservation of the variety and diversity of the provincial spirit. In fact, when the Roman Church was founded, it seemed as if a new power had been granted to Rome, which would thenceforth link to her destinies all the provinces of the West. But it was no less true that that unity and the power of the Roman authority could only be maintained by respecting in some measure the individuality and originality of national Churches. The wisdom and good sense of the Roman Church was greater in this respect than that of the Roman government, for she knew how to respect the rights, privileges, institutions, and liturgies which were peculiar to the different provinces of the Empire. Accordingly, from the earliest time, we find councils formed in every direction for the religious representation of a whole province. Africa was the first after Italy to afford an example of this, and so numerous were these national assemblies that from 397 to 419 Carthage alone saw fifteen synods. This activity was imitated by the other Churches. In Gaul, the councils followed in quick succession upon that of Arles, in which the right of the Holy See to intervene in the government of the whole of Christendom was so distinctly proclaimed; and in Spain we find, in the year 506, the Council of Illiberis, in which the rule of ecclesiastical celibacy was so stringently laid down, followed by that of

Saragossa, and lastly by the first of those councils of Toledo which were destined in time to mould the civil and public legislation of the nation.

Beside its councils, each province had its schools of theology; such as Marmoutiers and Lerins in Gaul, and Hippo in Africa. Each again of these schools had its doctors to the memory of whom it deferred; and lastly each had its peculiar heresies which in some measure reflected the character of each nation. Thus Spain in the fourth century produced the Priscillianists, Great Britain had her Pelagians, and Gaul gave forth the Semipelagians. Italy alone had no heretics, the reason of which we shall soon see.

Every Church had its saints, its national glory, who also represented it on high. And accordingly the poet Prudentius described the appearance of the Christian nations before Christ the Judge on His descent at the last day, each of them bringing its reliquary, with the remains of those martyrs who would protect and shield it from the divine justice.

Quum Deus dextram quatiens coruscam
Nube subnixus veniet rubente,
Gentibus justam positurus æquo
Pondere libram.
Orbe de magno caput excitata,
Obviam Christo properanter ibit
Civitas quæque pretiosa portans
Dona canistris.*

Thus the sentiment which may be called religious patriotism was of early rise. The Christian nationality differed widely from that of antiquity, which consisted in declaring everything foreign to be hostile: *hospes hostis*. In the economy of the modern world,

* Prud. Peristeph. iv. v. 13 et seq.

on the contrary, each nationality is but a function assigned by Providence to a given people, for which end it is developed, made strong, and endowed with glory, but which it can only accomplish in harmony with other races, and in the society of other nations; such is the peculiar property of modern nationalities. Each of them has its social mission in the bosom of that mighty society which is called the human race, and this fact will appear on a review of those centuries of the mediæval period in which Italy so gloriously fulfilled that duty of teaching which was her function during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the epoch of her great doctors; in which France formed the right hand of Christendom, and grasped the drawn sword in her defence against all comers; in which Spain and Portugal came, by means of their fleets, under the notice of those backward nations upon whom the light of Christian civilization had not yet shone. Such was the respective destiny and character of these nationalities after their necessary transformation through the hidden workings of Christianity; and thus we see that everything already contributed to the production and development of the individual and original genius of each of the great provinces of the Roman Empire.

But we must now turn our attention to each of those three great provinces in particular which were one day to be, Italy, France, and Spain, and which already, in some measure, bore the marks of their destiny. Italy was the one fitted above all to preserve her historical character; for she was by far the older, had lived longer under the same discipline, and the adverse influences of her social war had had time to abate. Therefore she preserved the impress of those two great

characteristics which had shown themselves from the very commencement of her civilization—the presence of the Etruscan and of the Roman element, the genius of religion and the genius of government. The Etruscans, who were especially a religious people, communicated to the Romans their traditions, their ceremonies, the use of auspices, and, in fact, whatever tended to impress upon the Eternal City that theocratic character which she has never put off. Rome has carried into all her works that good sense which made her the mistress of the world, and has marked everything with the seal of that eternal policy of hers, the powerful memory of which has not yet been effaced.

And, therefore, we are not surprised at finding these two principles—the theological and the governing spirit—persistent in the Italian character of modern times. We have already noticed that Italy produced no heresies, and this was one sign of the good sense with which she was deeply imbued, and which preserved her from the subtleties of Greece and the dreams of the East. Every system of error came in turn to find life and popularity at Rome, and only met there with obscurity, impotence, and death. Rome interfered in the great dispute on Arianism; she saved, on that occasion, the faith of the world, and from one end to another of the peninsula illustrious theologians started up in defence of orthodoxy, such as Ambrose of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli, Gaudentius and Philaster of Brescia, Maximus of Turin, Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, with many too numerous to mention. Above all this theological agitation the Papacy soared aloft, as the heir of the political spirit of the old Romans, that is to say, of their perseverance, their good sense,

their power, their faculty of comprehending what was great, and their knowledge of the art of triumphing over the mere interests of earth. But it owned one gift in addition to those of old Rome, in that it was unarmed, that it had no she-wolf nor eagle upon its standards, and that it wielded the power of persuasion, which was greater far than that of the sword.

At the moment which saw the government of the world escaping from the feeble hands of the Cæsars, in the time of Valentinian III. and Theodosius II., that falling dominion was restored by St. Leo, one of the greatest of the older Popes. We had marked the fresh vigour with which that famous man undertook the direction of all the spiritual and temporal affairs of the West, of the Empire, and of Christendom. On the one hand, he intervened in the East, at Chalcedon, to end the eternal disputes of the Greeks, and fix the dogma of the Incarnation; whilst, on the other, he arrested Attila at the Mincio, and bequeathed to the lasting gratitude of posterity the day whereon he rescued civilization in the West. The patriotism of the Romans of old still lived in his highly tempered spirit, and showed itself in that homily, which he preached on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, in which he celebrated the destiny of the new Rome, and fondly pointed to Providence itself as presiding over the temporal greatness of the queenly city which had paved a way by her conquests for the conversion of the universe.

Thus from the fifth century Rome and Italy, now become Christian, preserved the two great peculiarities of the ancient Italy, and we have proof that they retained it throughout the whole mediæval period; for

at the close of the Carlovingian period, the theological spirit on the one hand was manifest in that succession of famous men, the two Saint Anselms, Peter Lombard, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventura, whilst the political spirit so agitated the peninsula that the humblest artisans of the towns formed corporations whereby they might take part in the government of the commonwealth, and was developed to such a point as to bring forth in due time, in the person of Machiavel, one of the greatest political writers of the world.

And these two elements, which formed the characteristics of the Middle Age in Italy, were united in the persons of such great Popes as St. Gregory the Great, Gregory the Seventh, and Innocent the Third. And they joined also in lending inspiration to the "Divine Comedy," which would have been nothing had it not stood out especially as the poem of theology and politics in Italy, as they had been conceived and produced by the mediæval epoch.

We must ever carefully distinguish the two periods in the destiny of Italy, and refrain from confounding her mediæval genius with that of the Revival, or from throwing upon that strong and manly Italy of old, which was ready to suffer and to resist, the responsibility of the actions of that more modern Italy which owned as many tyrants as she had noblemen, ended by degenerating into languor, forgetting her destiny as she knelt at the feet of women, and losing her time in the wretched exercises of an emasculate poetry, or in sensual pleasures; the Italy which still bore her crown of flowers, but beheld all her other diadems trampled under foot, and all her glories compromised in the dangers of an obscure future. How-

ever, mediæval Italy rigidly preserved the character which she had manifested from the earliest times of the Western Empire.

In the case of Spain, the persistency of the primitive character was still more striking. When the Romans first penetrated that country, they found there the ancient Iberian people mingled with Celts, and remarked their singular gravity of character, which had this especial peculiarity, that they never walked except for the purpose of fighting, otherwise they sat still; their sobriety was equal to their obstinacy; they fought frequently, but in isolated groups, and their women wore black veils. All these traits belong to the Spain of modern times. Roman culture made rapid strides amongst them; Sertorius founded a school at Orca, in the heart of the country, and established there both Greek and Latin masters. Metellus praised the poets of Spain, whose laudation had not been displeasing to himself. A certain foreign element was always observable in that Hispano-Latin school which was destined to such celebrity, and which successively produced Portius Latro, the declaimer, the two Senecas, Lucan, Quintilian, Columella, Martial, and Florus, two-thirds in fact of the great writers of the second age of Roman literature. Yet, with the exception of the faultless Quintilian, they all precisely presented that inflation, elaboration, taste for mock brilliancy, exaggeration in sentiment and idea, and prodigality of metaphor, which make up the defects of the Spanish school. They were all of them represented to a certain point by that rhetorician, of whom Seneca speaks, who was always longing to tell of mighty things, and was so enamoured of size, that he kept bulky servants, bulky

furniture, and a bulky wife, for which reason he was nicknamed by his contemporaries *Senecio grandio.* Thus early did Castilian bombast and exaggeration develop.

Neither did the sacred literature of Spain appear capable of greatly modifying these characteristics, for it remained very poor up to the century of which we are treating. It was doubtless a Spanish bishop, Hosius of Cordova, who had presided at Nicæa, yet we do not find either that he had written much, or that his country had produced many doctors. But another province was working for her, and indeed it often happens in the history of literature, that some country seems to labour but to perish, and finally to disappear; then we ask for the reason of such efforts, for the purpose of productions of genius in a land soon destined to be brought under the barbaric yoke, and at last it appears that the genius of the fallen country of that stifled nationality has taken refuge in a neighbouring land. Thus Spain profited by all the labour of Africa, and the spirit of Tertullian, of St. Cyprian, and of St. Augustine was destined one day to cross the strait and inflame the Spanish Church. Where in fact did St. Augustine find his heirs, if not in the country of St. Theresa and of St. John of the Cross? With a mystic literature as fertile as hers, modern Spain was bound to possess a more abundant poetic literature than had ever yet existed. And in fact we have seen, that if this Christian literature of the fifth century was at all productive in Spain, it was so especially in the shape of poetry, and that with an extraordinary abundance; for all those Christian poets, Juvencus, Damasus, Dracontius, and the inexhaustible

Prudentius, were Spaniards. Prudentius was especially the poet of dogma, to which he bent his mind with a singular energy, developing it with all the zeal of a controversialist, and with all the exuberance which afterwards appeared in the poetry of Lope de Vega and of Calderon. But on a further examination we find out the spirit of the poetry of Prudentius; that he was not content with throwing dogma into verse, but that he brought it, as it were, on to the stage, by personifying the human affections and passions, and composing a poem, entitled "Psychomachia," in which he opposed faith to idolatry, chastity to sensuality, humility to pride, and charity to avarice. Nothing assuredly could, at first sight, seem more fanciful than such a composition. Was it worth while deserting that pagan literature, then so charged with heavy allegory, which personified the passions, the fatherland, or war, sometimes Africa, at others Europe, only to create new fictions, and people the field of Christian poetry with unreal personages? Yet we halt in our condemnation, for the Middle Age was also to be smitten with a love for allegory, and to delight in multiplying in infinite number, and without the least vestige of idolatrous intention, the personification of the human affections; as for instance on the magnificent portal of the cathedral at Chartres, which shows us still the senses, virtues, passions, in a word the whole moral encyclopædia of man, the "speculum chorale" of Vincent of Beauvais, represented by human figures, with happily chosen attributes, and we find these allegories carved in stone in every Western nation.

The Spanish drama effected more, for it placed them in action upon the stage and endowed them with

speech. It was the task of Calderon to take up the subjects of Prudentius. In the *Autos Sacramentales* he personified grace, nature, the five senses, the seven capital sins, the synagogue and the Gentile world, until by his marvellous art he endowed with speech that people of statues which had been produced by the Middle Ages. He made them descend from their niches, showed them to the assembled spectators, whom he interested in them as in real personages, and so mixed them with the characters of history that the readers of the dramas of Calderon have to endure a dialogue between Adam and Sin, and to welcome all those other personifications which could only have thus been kept alive by dint of the genius, fire, and inexhaustible spirit which filled these poets of Spain. And this action passed not before a select and lettered audience, nor a handful of courtiers from the court of Philip III. and Philip IV., brought together to enjoy the delicate pleasures of academicians, but before the mighty crowd which filled the great square of Madrid, which pressed together from every quarter to see the allegory from one end to the other, and follow the drama up to its prearranged close, upon which the back of the theatre opened widely and discovered an altar, a priest, and the bread and wine.

Perhaps it is less easy to grasp with the same precision the characteristics of the French genius in the spirit of the Gallo-Romans of the fifth century. For there, in fact, the Germanic impress was stronger, and we cannot forget that the Franks have poured their blood into ours, that their sword passed into the hands of our fathers, that their traditions and language brought aliment to our own. It is certain that on

passing the Alps or the Pyrenees, and crossing the rivers of Southern Gaul, and especially the Loire, the German mark is found to be more distinct as the North is approached. Nevertheless, we are above all a Neo-Latin people, the essence of our civilization came to us from the Roman Conquest, though from no sudden and unresisted invasion, for perhaps no other part of Europe shows so remarkably both the attracting power of the civilization of Rome and the resistance which it encountered.

The conquest of Gaul by Cæsar had indeed been rapid, and was quickly consummated by his successors, but as quickly also appeared its impatience against a foreign yoke. In the time of Vespasian, Classicus and Tutor caused themselves to be proclaimed emperors, and forced the vanquished legions to swear allegiance to the new eagles of Gaul. In the third century, and the reign of Julian, Gaul, with Spain and Britain, formed a Transalpine empire, the leadership of which was successively held by Cæsars—worthy of a better fate—Posthumus, Victorinus, and Tetricus, who, as warriors, statesmen, and highly-principled men, would assuredly have been capable of founding a durable empire had the season marked out by Providence arrived. Lastly, when in the fifth century Gaul was invaded by the Vandals, and had been forgotten by the Court of Ravenna, a soldier named Constantine, whom the soldiery of Britain had already chosen, and around whose standard they were ranged, was recognized by her as emperor. He remained for five years the master of the Gallic provinces, took possession of several cities, obliged Honorius to send him the purple, and did not die till A.D. 411, after a

long succession of treasonable attempts on the part of those around him.

We must not mistake the motives which impelled the Gauls thus to rebel against Rome and three times to proclaim a Gallo-Roman empire, nor set it down to their hatred of the Roman civilization, for if they detested the tyranny, they loved the enlightenment of the Imperial city. In fact, they always selected the Roman insignia, and bestowed the purple upon the generals whom they crowned. It was always their desire to preserve the traditions of the Empire, purged from the fiscal exactions and the egoism which sacrificed every interest to the cravings of the Roman populace, in order to provide them with bread and the games of the circus—*panem et circenses*—and to save Roman literature for their country, whose schools were so flourishing that, from the earliest ages, the rhetoricians of Gaul supplied orators for the nascent cities of Britain.

Gallia causidicos docuit facunda Britannos.*

These schools reached so high a pitch of excellence as to draw from Gratian that decree which conferred such an increase of dignity upon the seminaries of Trèves. Ausonius witnesses to the popularity of the crowd of grammarians and rhetoricians who taught at Autun, Lyons, Narbonne, Toulouse, and Bordeaux. In fact, the passion for eloquence and a taste for the art of oratory reappeared everywhere; and whilst we may mark the gradual extinction at Rome of the last embers of the art which had produced Cicero, some remains of it survived in Gaul, and showed themselves in a miser-

* Juvenal, Sat. xv. 3.

able but still recognizable form in the panegyrists of the emperors. We have already incidentally condemned this custom, and scorned the ignominy of these eulogiums, often addressed, as they were, to blood-stained men by others who were greedy of gold, of dignities, or of patronage; but we must still own that amidst this humiliation and littleness lurked the last traditions of the oratorical art, and that such degenerate men as an Eumenius, a Pacatus, or a Mamertinus bear witness at least to the taste and passion of the Gauls of their day for eloquence and the science of forcible and refined speaking. What Cato said of the Gallic race has always been true—when he defined their character prophetically and with his own admirable terseness in the words "*Rem militarem et argute loqui.*"*

There can be no better representative of the Gallo-Roman spirit in this respect than Sidonius Apollinaris, one of the chief writers of the fifth century. He was born at Lyons about the year 430, and was probably of Arvernic race, sprung from one of those wealthy Gothic families which preserved the literary traditions of Rome, and kept alive an hereditary bitterness against her dominion. He had received his education from skilful masters, and studiously guarded the remembrance of them. The name of the man from whom he had received lessons in poetry was Ennius, for the time had come for that usurpation of classic names which soon filled the schools with Ovids, Horaces, and Virgils. His master in philosophy was called Eusebius. Suddenly this young Gaul, who had thus been trained

* Gallia duas res industriosissime persequitur,
Rem militarem et argute loqui.

in the art of eloquence and in philosophical science, found himself called to the highest dignity by the accession of his father-in-law, Avitus, to the Imperial throne. This wealthy Gaul named Avitus had, in fact, just been set over the Roman Empire by the Gothic king Theodoric, and soon after his proclamation fell beneath the hand of an obscure assassin. Sidonius Apollinaris had been summoned to Rome to pronounce a public panegyric on his father-in-law in the presence of the senate, and shortly after, on the murder of Avitus, he pronounced at Lyons an eulogium upon his successor Majorian. A little later, when Majorian had disappeared in his turn, Sidonius, who was too fertile in these eulogies, pronounced the panegyric on Anthemius at Rome. He could not have judged his conduct thus himself, for favours multiplied around him in proportion to the number of his rhymes. He had attained the highest honours in politics and literature, his statue was placed in the Forum of Trajan at Rome amongst the chief poets of the Empire, he had been raised to patrician rank and the dignity of prefect of Rome, and had in a word drained the cup of human delights, when suddenly the weariness of temporal advantage, which is apt to lay hold of higher souls, seized upon him, so that in a short time he was found to have become a convert, to have adopted a severer life, and to have been carried by popular acclamation to the episcopal chair of Clermont. Renouncing thereupon profane poetry and the distractions and wanderings of a worldly life, he assumed the demeanour of a holy bishop. But how could he renounce literature, the first delight of his youth, and how avoid manifesting in all that he wrote the trace of the spirit of the

Gallo-Roman schools in which he had been nurtured? Accordingly, on reading his collected works, upon whatever epoch of his career we may light, whether we have to do with the Roman prefect or the Christian bishop, we always find different sentiments expressed in the same language. For, in fact, Sidonius Apollinaris had desired above all things to gain skill in the art of eloquence, and had gained it. Such, on the authority of Gregory of Tours, was his power in this respect, that he was capable of an immediate improvisation on any given subject, and he himself is careful to inform us, that being charged with the task of providing a bishop for the people of Bourges, who were then divided amongst themselves, he had only two watches of the night, or six hours, in which to dictate the discourse which he had to pronounce on the occasion before the assembled clergy and people. And therefore he begged excuse, if in consequence "an oratorical partition, historical authorities, poetical images, grammatical figures, and the flashes which the rhetoricians strike out of their controversies," could not be found there; his discourse was in fact merely simple and clear, and that idea humiliated him.*

But he vindicated himself by his correspondence, in which he aspired to imitate Pliny and Symmachus. In this he seems so far to have succeeded that he was prevailed upon to collect and publish them. All these letters, in fact, show traces of the polish which was bestowed upon them before handing them over to the chances of publicity. But that which put Sidonius Apollinaris most completely at his ease was the power of rivalling his friend throughout the interchange of

* Sidon. Apollin. Ep. lib. vii. 9.

correspondence in wit, research, refinement, and even obscurity. He was fond of struggling against difficulties, plunging into hazardous descriptions, and laying open to the last details the life of the Romans or the barbarians of his time; details which, though useful for history, were tainted with all the vices of the Decline. He put the finishing stroke to his achievements, and fancied himself at the summit of literary glory, when he succeeded in mingling with his friendly letters some improvised verses and a few distichs which had suddenly occurred to his mind under circumstances which he had not foreseen. It was upon these little poems, composed out of hand at the desire of the emperor or some other personage, that he especially prided himself. Having, for instance, one day to pass over a torrent, he stopped to look for a ford, but as he could not easily find a convenient passage, he paused till the water had lowered, and composed a distich which could be read at will from one end or the other.

Præcipiti modo quod decurrit tramite flumen
Tempore consumptum jam cito deficiet.

The superiority of these verses over those of Virgil and Ovid lay in their capability of being thus reversed—

Deficiet cito jam consumptum tempore flumen
Tramite decurrit quod modo præcipiti.*

On other occasions he infused a greater measure of grace and gallantry, so that on reading the verses which he made to be inscribed on the goblet which Evodius desired to offer to the Queen Regnahilda, wife of Euric, one might be reminded of the French wit of the seventeenth century. The princess was a thorough barbarian

* Sid. Apol. Ep. lib. ix. 14.

no doubt, but the lines were most refined. The cup which was to be offered to her was in the form of a sea-shell, and in allusion to the shape and the associations attached to it by antiquity, Sidonius said, "The shell whereupon the mighty Triton bore Venus can bear no comparison with this one. Abase a little, we pray thee, thy sovereign majesty, and receive, O powerful patroness, an humble gift. Happy is the water which, enclosed in the resplendent metal, will touch the more resplendent countenance of a lovely queen. For whenever she deigns to plunge her lips therein, the reflection of her face will whiten the silver cup."*

Nothing can be more graceful than this, and the most elaborate madrigals would fail to excel the exquisite gallantry of Sidonius Apollinaris. There is no indication that he had entered ecclesiastical orders at this period, and he perhaps appears in the character of a poet of the world.

Had he no other claim upon the attention of posterity, Sidonius Apollinaris would present himself as a man of wit, and so fulfil the second condition of Cato's sketch of the Gallic character, "*argute loqui;*" but he would be far from the first, and nothing shows that he had the zeal for action—"*rem militarem.*" But this was not the case. On becoming a bishop, Sidonius had adopted all the sentiments of his office, and in consequence he was the defender of his episcopal city. We know how the great bishops of the fifth century became, amidst the universal disorganization and the incessant invasions of the barbarians, at once the civil and voluntary magistrates of their respective cities, and how their moral authority often availed to sustain the courage of

* Sid. Apol. Ep. lib. iv. 8, ad Evodium.

the citizens and to daunt and divide the barbarians. Sidonius occupied at Clermont the outpost of the Empire, the edge of the remnant of the Roman province, and the frontiers of the kingdom which the emperors had been obliged to make over to the Visigoths ; and the Visigoths, discontented with their boundaries, pushed themselves in daily attack upon the walls of Clermont, and obliged Sidonius to struggle to obtain the intervention of the emperor in order to stem the progress of barbarian conquest and spare the episcopal city the horrors of invasion. He had long hoped, and for long excited the bravery of his fellow-citizens, to defend the city walls in despite of all the miseries of famine and pestilence. An imperial deputation at length waited upon the Visigothic monarch and proposed a capitulation, by the terms of which Clermont was to be abandoned to him on the consideration of his respecting the rest of the Empire. Sidonius was suddenly made aware of this treaty. Whilst he had been so energetically defending the walls of his episcopal city the men in whom he had placed his hopes had betrayed him. Thereupon he wrote to one of them the following letter, in which we no longer find the old spirit of refinement, but the energy, warmth, and dash which marked the character of his race. " Such is at present the condition of this unhappy corner of the earth, that it has suffered less from war than from peace. Our servitude has become the price of another's safety. O misery! the slavery of the Arverni, who, if one goes back to their origin, had dared to call themselves the brothers of the Romans, and to number themselves among the races which issued from the blood of Ilion! If one stops at their modern glory, these are the men

who by their unaided efforts arrested the arms of the public enemy, who from behind their ramparts defied the assaults of the Goths, and struck back terror into the barbarian camp. Behold, then, our reward for starvation, fire, sword, pestilence, spears that have fattened in blood, warriors emaciated by privation! This is the glorious peace for which we have lived upon the herbs plucked from the crevices of our rocks. Employ all your wisdom to break so shameful an agreement. Yes, if needs be, we should rejoice at seeing ourselves again besieged, at again suffering from hunger, if we might fight once more." *

In this man the French genius appears with all the urbanity, with the lightness for which it has been so often reproached, but also with that passionate feeling of honour which will never be effaced. The latter characteristic was preserved throughout those long ages of barbarism, upon the threshold of which we are standing. We may observe the remarkable fact that during the whole Merovingian period, a certain number of illustrious personages may be seen who became afterwards bishops, and in time canonized saints, called to the courts of the kings and raised to the highest dignities of the kingdom on account of their skill in the art of speaking—*quia facundus erat*—and because of their possessing the power which from that time forward subjugated the minds of men. And again, if we go farther, and plunge into the depths of the Middle Ages at the time in which the French language first was spoken, we shall notice that the chief characteristic of that nascent literature was that it was military and chivalric, and destined by those qualities to make the

* Sid. Apoll. Ep. lib. vii. 7, ad Græcum.

tour of Europe; the whole of Europe, nevertheless, confirming that its origin was France, that it was born in the land whose natives love the art of eloquence, but better still the achievement of acts of prowess—*rem militarem.*

We have thus pointed out the origin of the three great Neo-Latin nationalities in Spain, in Italy, and in Gaul; and at the end of our proposed task we find two points established; the first being that the Roman world and its ancient civilization perished far less suddenly than has been supposed; that its resistance to barbarism was long; and that its good and its evil institutions, its vices as well as its virtues, were prolonged into the Middle Age, and explained many of those errors the source of which has been but imperfectly recognized. Thus astrology, and the exaggerations of royal despotism, all the pedantry, and those lingering memories of pagan art which can be detected in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, are to be traced back to a time-honoured origin, and formed so many links by which the Middle Age clung to antiquity, and which it did not desire to sever.

On the other hand, we have established the position that the Christian civilization contained already, and in greater completeness than has been supposed, those developments which have been generally attributed to the times of barbarism. Thus the Church already possessed the Papacy and monasticism; and in the sphere of manners we have specified the independence of the individual, the popular sentiment of liberty, and the dignity of the woman. In the sphere of letters we have marked how the philosophy of St. Augustine contained in germ the scholastic labours of the mediæval

epoch. We have seen the "City of God" tracing nobler views of history, and, lastly, discovered in the Catacombs all the elements which were developed in the modern basilicas.

And thus Providence employed a singular art and a mighty course of preparation in the work of linking together periods which, from the different spirits which moved them, would seem fated to be for ever separate. We see that when the Almighty desires to mould a newer world, He gently and gradually breaks the ancient edifice which must fall, and uses its materials considerably in rearing the modern monument which is to succeed. As in a beleaguered city the defenders begin betimes behind the works which the enemy is attacking to construct the fortification which is to succeed them, and before which all the efforts of the besieging force will fail, so also, while the ancient barrier of Roman civilization was falling stone by stone, the Christian rampart was being formed behind which society might find another entrenchment. And this spectacle should serve us for an example and a lesson. The invasion of the barbarians was without doubt the mightiest and most terrible revolution that has ever occurred; and yet we see the infinite care with which Providence softened the blow in some respects, and broke the fall of the ancient world. Let us also trust that our own epoch will not be more unfortunate; that if our old fortress is fated to fall, new and solid defences will be raised to protect us; and, in fine, that the civilization which has cost so much to God and to man will never perish.

FINIS.

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