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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

IN THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AT ITS
ANNUAL MEETING, ON SATURDAY, 11th, DEC. 1831.

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PRESIDENT OF INDIANA COLLEGE.

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1831.

At a meeting of the Indiana Historical Society, on Saturday evening, 11th December, the following resolution was *unanimously* adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of this society be presented to the Rev. Dr. WYLIE, for the appropriate and eloquent discourse delivered this evening at their request, and that he be respectfully solicited to furnish a copy of the same for publication.

Ordered, That Mr. Farnham and Judge Morris be a committee to communicate to Dr. Wylie the foregoing resolution.

DISCOURSE.

The wisdom of those provisions, moral and intellectual, which the author of nature has employed in connecting the successive generations of the human race, demands an attentive and profound consideration. It is not bare existence, that is transmitted, but existence with accumulating good or evil. Nor is it from the times immediately preceding their own, that the people of any generation are thus affected: the good or evil may come upon them from periods of the most remote antiquity. As far back as the current of events can be traced, it is seen to have been directed in its course, by the agency of men, who, long since, have been withdrawn from the busy scenes of life. In the universe, so far at least, as our knowledge extends, nothing is insulated. Moral, no less than physical, nature is, indeed, divided into individuals, but these are collected into systems, and, as from every orb that revolves in unlimited space, there proceeds an influence which reaches to every other, however remote, so in the aggregate of human beings, there is not an individual whose condition and character may not be affected by every other. The same law may forcibly pervade the intelligent universe. The human race, coming into existence in succession, the stream of influence is in the same direction with the course of time: the past controls the present, and the present the future. But there is also an influence in a reverse order, of the future upon the present, and there is no man, whose sentiments are in conformity with nature, who is not determined in his course of conduct by motives, drawn from a regard to those who are to come after him.

Moral causes produce their effects by a slow and secret, but sure process, like that of vegetation. The earth has completed three fourths of her annual revolution, before the seed deposited in her bosom, produces its fruit. So it often happens, that the appropriate consequences of human actions, do not take place till late in the life of the individual. Sometimes not till life is ended: yet, we believe, he will find them in that unknown world whither death conveys him. But, as nations have a more permanent existence on earth, the results of moral causes, so far as they are concerned, are disclosed in this world, not always, nor even usually, in the course of one generation, or two, but, for the most part, within a period sufficiently brief to be illustrated by the lights of history. So that, it is to history that the world is, in a great degree, indebted for whatever sense of morality prevails in it. The tendency of actions is the criterion by which mankind generally judge of their moral nature. The philosopher and the christian have a better test; but the many will never be persuaded to condemn that course of conduct which they see to be prosperous. The mass of mankind would never agree with Lucan in weighing the opinion of Cato against the decision of the gods.

"Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa, Catoni."

"The successful cause the Gods approved, the unsuccessful, Cato."

It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that they should be accustomed to view things as they appear on the extended scale of their causes and consequences. It is often in the power of bad men to shew instances in which wicked men seem to be successful. The immediate consequences of vice are often in reality, and always considered, by those who practise it, to be advantageous. In this, indeed, consists the nature of the present state as a state of trial. For there could be no trial without temptation, and no temptation, if no immediate advantage appeared on the side of vice. One reason why temptations to a profligate course are frequently so successful in youth, arises from the inexperience that belongs to that interesting but dangerous stage of life. The young are apt to be delighted with the free and careless gaiety, the false honor, the unrestrained indulgence and appearance of generous feeling, with which certain vices seem to be connected. They are captivated by what appears to them, the manly and honorable carriage and deportment of the gallant and high spirited young gentleman, who, out of pure friendship, would lead them to participate in his licentious pleasures. They partake, and are undone. But could they see, at first, what a few short years will reveal, the same individual, now the object of their inconsiderate admiration, besotted, corrupted, debased in body and mind, poor, forsaken, shunned, despised and abhorred, and sinking into an untimely grave, the charm would be broken, and they would fly from his company as from the solicitations of an infernal demon. But they do not see these things, for they are hidden in the future. How important, then, that they be taught to see them in the past, which is a sample of the future. "The thing that has been is that which shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun." It is thus that biography, which is a species of history, even the biography of "evil men and seducers," may be consulted by the young with so much advantage. In fact, young people, whose minds have been seasonably imbued with the wholesome influence of good reading, seldom, if ever, turn out profligates in after life. And what biography is to individuals, general history is to nations. The incidents, which make the ground work of the latter, are not, indeed, noted by the same historian; but some by one, and some by another, in long succession, till at length, all the testimony respecting the actors and events of the period to be illustrated are, by some competent hand, collected, compared and embodied in the form of a continued narrative. A history of this kind may be compared to a series of astronomical observations, continued through successive ages. Some of the heavenly bodies, move in orbits so extended, that their course cannot be determined in the lifetime of one observer. But he takes his observations, his successor does the same, and so on, till, by taking the whole together, some future astronomer is enabled to determine the location of the track, in which the ethereal traveller performs his appointed journey through the heavens. So is the course which nations pursue, marked by the notices of history; and its influence, in this re-

spect, has been great and salutary, on the policy of the civilized world.

There are principles implanted in our hearts by the hand of nature, intended to be the guards and auxiliaries of virtue, which, as they operate in a degree independent of reason and will, may be either strengthened or impaired, but not entirely extirpated. Among these, a regard to character holds a chief place. Over such as live in obscurity, its influence is, perhaps, inconsiderable. But with those who occupy conspicuous stations in society, this is not the case. Knowing that their actions undergo the scrutiny of the public, they cannot feel at ease, while conscious that they merit censure. They even anticipate the condemnation of posterity, and the reproaches of their own minds seem to be re-echoed by millions of voices, issuing not only from the circle of surrounding contemporaries, but from the indignant ranks of future generations. The power of this sentiment is even more sensibly felt in anticipation of the future, than in view of the present. Those among whom we live, may be biassed by interest, or blinded by passion. Conscious integrity may therefore scorn their censures. A tyrant, on the other hand, may find means to corrupt or mislead the public sentiment, and the stings of guilt may be soothed by the flattery of parasites. The press may be shackled or bought, and the murmurs of the multitude will be suppressed while the iron mace of power is held over them. But in the meanwhile, a tribunal is preparing under the auspices of history, when the voice of truth will be heard, when impartial justice will preside; passion, and prejudice, and fear, having died away, time, that great revealer of secrets, having brought every thing to light; fame with her hundred tongues, stands ready to proclaim the sentence to all nations. Instances there are, of beings, in the shape of men, who can persuade themselves that, at death, they shall cease to exist; but it may be doubted, whether there ever lived a man, so much a monster, as to reconcile his feelings, to the idea of anticipated infamy. It is usual, indeed, to say of a man, when he is dead, that he is beyond the reach of censure; but this avails not, since he dreads it while living, and that, though the sentence which involves it, may not be pronounced till long after his bones have mouldered into dust.

A sensibility to character is not less powerful, and is certainly more lovely, when it manifests itself in pursuing what is praiseworthy, than when it deters from vice by the fear of reproach. And the circumstances in which, under the former of these modifications, it appears to the best advantage, are precisely those, in which the weakness of human virtue renders its assistance the most necessary. There is something childish, to say the least, in the conduct of a man who is always looking to popularity, and who goes with reluctance to the performance of a noble action, unless he can be paid in hand by present applause. But when we see one holding fast his integrity, though surrounded with opposition, and acting for the public good, while the public impeach his mo-

tive; and detract from his services, aware that, when the enmity of rivals, the envy of inferiors and the malice of calumniators shall be quelled in death, a generation will arise to enjoy the benefit of his labors and to bless his memory, we not only love him for his goodness, but revere and venerate him for his magnanimity. Two, the most splendid examples which history furnishes, to illustrate the excellence of this lofty character, (I except of course, the Author of Christianity, whom it would be impious to mention, in connection with any imperfect mortal, however exalted in virtue,) were men, who lived in ages and countries the most remote from each other, but between whom, not only as it respects their moral qualities, but the incidents of their lives, there exists a considerable resemblance—both distinguished for heroic virtue, both chosen instruments in the hand of God, of delivering nations from bondage, both tried with the incessant murmurings of the envious and pusillanimous, and both removed from the earth, before they had seen the people whom they liberated, quietly settled in the land of their inheritance—Moses and George Washington.

He certainly fulfils an office gratifying to the best feelings of the human heart, who employs the powers of history, in rearing a monument to the honor of such illustrious men, causing them to live again in the memory of distant ages. Our sense of justice is consoled, for the sufferings and ill treatment they once endured, while we imagine—and surely it is not a vain imagination—that, though invisible to mortal eyes, they still exist, and from the high sphere to which they are exalted, look down with delight upon the effects which their labors have produced on the state of that world which they have left, and on the benefitted and grateful multitudes who love to cherish the remembrance of their exalted worth. We kindle into emulation while we read the story of their virtuous deeds, and are encouraged, in the race that is set before us, by seeing, in the success of their example, how difficulties may be overcome by perseverance. The recital of their troubles and perplexities awakens our sympathy, and we glow with admiration at the firmness of their principles. We are better reconciled with the world, on account of their virtue, by which its darkness has been broken; and our despondency for its future destinies is relieved, by those triumphs in the good cause which they have achieved. Disgusted, as we must often be, with the vices and vulgarities of common life, it is delightful to seek, in converse with the wise and good of former ages, to whose company the historian introduces us, refreshment and relief to our spirits; and we are even put in better humor with our nature and with all who partake in it, by seeing in those specimens of excellence which it has from time to time exhibited, that it is not, by any law of invincible necessity, doomed to the baseness of undistinguished and hopeless reprobation. Our reasoning powers are immensely aided and improved, by gathering up, here a little and there a little, of those sublime instructions, which experience has strewed around the track, along which the human race have been for so many ages

moving: and the rays of those burning and shining lights which, at distant periods and in different countries, have stood alone, amidst the surrounding darkness, being collected and arranged by the magic power of historical genius, shed abroad a cheering light upon the pathway of life.

An acquaintance with history will not, indeed, inspire in man the love of virtue. A special influence from above can alone effect this. Yet it deserves our notice, that the author of this influence has connected it with truth, and that history is one of the forms in which He himself has condescended to communicate the truth to mankind. Historical truth is one of the pillars of christianity. And whoever will lay aside prejudice, and, divesting himself of all those prepossessions on one side or the other, arising from the artful attacks of the enemies of divine revelation, or the awkward and unhappy defences of its friends, will take up the Old Testament, as he would a new book, and peruse it, as a book of its pretensions, ought to be perused, and in the exercise of such a temper as an ignorant sinner ought to feel, and then will go through its sequel in the New, in the same manner, cannot fail to rise from the perusal a wiser and a better man, if not a *confirmed* believer in the truth of the christian system. Even profane history will not be without its use in this respect, as it tends to impress the conviction, that the world is under the control of a moral governor. A proper belief of this truth must dispose the mind favorably towards the inspired volume, wherein it is so clearly exhibited and illustrated. Besides, every one acquainted with history and with the bible, must see that the principles of moral government contained in the latter, coincide with the tenor of human experience unfolded in the former. That some of the most celebrated historians have been opposed to christianity, affords no ground of objection to what has been alleged. No amount of truth, not demonstration itself, will *compel* belief. Gibbon and Hume were infidels; yet the great work of the former, notwithstanding the sly innuendoes and studied irony with which it abounds, might be recommended, as containing as much matter of fact, inconsistent with the infidelity of the author, and in support of the cause which he so plainly hated, as can be found in almost any other book of equal extent. Let any man read, for instance—I mean not a fool, who is prepared to swallow without examination, whatever comes from such a source—but a man of sense, who will reflect on what he reads—let any man of this character read the causes which this ingenious writer has assigned for the rapid spread of christianity, and he will find, if he is an infidel, not a little to shake his opinion.

The doctrine of a moral government has been sadly misunderstood. Yet the practice, sometimes to be found among professing christians, and common with all ignorant and superstitious people, of putting an interpretation to suit themselves on every passing event, arises from a deplorable misapplication of a very sound principle. The wheels on which the affairs of men, and especially of nations revolve, are so large, that a minute portion of their

circumference, such as falls under the observation of an individual in the course of a single life, is insufficient to justify a judgment respecting the whole. The designs of God cannot be seen, till the whole train of events which they contemplate has passed before us. We should be careful, therefore, to "judge nothing before the time." Yet, that the Almighty has connected natural evil with moral—that suffering is, according to the settled order of things, the fruit of transgression, and that "righteousness exalteth a nation," are truths, which history teaches in the most impressive manner. These, and a variety of other maxims favorable to the cause of virtue and human happiness, which the experience of a few years very imperfectly illustrates, are made clear in the events of a more extended period. For, while the great drama, in which nations are concerned, is in progress, both the actors and spectators are insensibly changed, the individuals of one generation retiring while others are coming in their place; so that no one can judge of what is before him, till the whole scheme, and the connexion and tendency of every part, is laid open by the catastrophe.

In reviewing the past, we are often surprised to find incidents trifling in themselves and apparently fortuitous, turning the whole course of events; the plans and works of men tending to results exactly the reverse of what they had in view, accidental discoveries in nature, deemed of no importance at first, changing insensibly, the entire face of society, and strange coincidences of circumstances, each in itself inert, but deriving power, from their junction at the critical moment, to shake the world. Observations such as these, which the attentive reader of history cannot fail to make, must indicate to his views, a wise and controlling agency at the helm of all human affairs.

History gives us an insight into our own nature. In the past ages of the world, man has been placed in almost every possible condition that the nature of earthly things can furnish. The power of all sorts of institutions—of all sorts of systems and forms of government—of every conceivable religious and philosophical creed, and of every possible combination of circumstances has been, at one time or another, tried upon him—and truly, he has occasionally exhibited strange phases of character, and been seen ranging the scale of qualities from the point where he affronts the brute, up to that which shews him on the confines of angelic nature. Whatever be his tendencies and capacities, his powers and frailties, we shall find them in history: for they have been all developed. Among them we find, it is true, a capability of indefinite improvement, and therefore, it would be unreasonable to conclude that he will always be what he now is. But, I am afraid the doctrine of his perfectibility is a fiction. Of one thing I am quite certain, that the same spirit which in modern days, has advanced the doctrine, will never verify it, and that, if perfection is ever to be his lot on earth, it will not be attained by an overweening confidence in his own powers: for the past has shown this of him, that,

when he thinks himself strong, he is then the weakest, and the most a fool, when he boasts of his wisdom. The most discouraging thing in his history, perhaps, is this, that he never has been able to unite religion and philosophy; but, when he seeks to be religious, he forsakes his reason, and when he professes to consult his reason, he forgets his dependence on his Maker.

Considering man in reference to that relation which subsists between his capacities of enjoyment and the things of this world, and in view of the question so often asked and variously answered, What is the chief good? history gives, at least, a negative answer, which, were it seriously regarded, might save us from much extravagance and folly, as well as pain and disappointment. There is no road to earthly good, real or imaginary, in which some of mankind have not pursued it, with all the ardor and energy of which their nature was susceptible. They have heaped up wealth, courted honor, grasped at power, sought for pleasure in every way and by all expedients. The sceptre, the mitre, the sword, art, nature, solitude, society, every thing has been tried, and man has come away from them all, dissatisfied. Those things which, usually, men most intensely covet, have been found by experience to be supremely worthless. One seeks to be prime minister of a great nation, obtains the office, and stabs himself. Another, weary of royalty, renounces it, and then goes to war to recover what he had voluntarily resigned. A third aims at universal empire, spends years of restlessness and sheds oceans of blood to obtain it, and dies, chained to a rock. "What do you intend," said Cyneas to Pyrrhus, preparing for an expedition into Italy, "when you have subdued the Romans?" "Pass into Sicily." "What then?" "Conquer the Carthaginians." "And what next?" "Return home and enjoy ourselves." "And why," said the sensible minister, "cannot we do the last, even now?" The instructions of the Bible, relative to human happiness, may be summed up in two words, "Godliness and Contentment." And history teaches the same: the latter, by shewing us the perplexing causes and sad reverses to which those in high stations are exposed, and the former, (I comprise in my remarks, sacred as well as secular history,) by recommending to our imitation, the wisdom of those, who, feeling themselves to be "pilgrims and strangers on earth, sought a better country even an heavenly, and a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Among the various uses of history, the rational amusement it affords, should not be entirely overlooked. The mind requires, occasionally, to be relieved from the severer studies and cares of life, not by positive inaction, but by some employment, calculated to give a gentle exercise to its faculties, and to soothe its sensibilities by the delightful play of imagination. History, in a high degree, answers these purposes, while, at the same time, it conveys useful instruction. Its incidents are no less striking than those which occur in works of fiction, with the additional advantage, that they do not mislead the understanding, nor corrupt the

taste, by exhibiting a false representation of human life. What can give a more agreeable excitement to our feelings, than to follow the narrative of the historian, while he brings up to view, the characters and pursuits of those who once acted and suffered on this earth, as we now do, who felt and exhibited all the variety of passion, which the chargeful scenes of life are calculated to elicit, and whom we recognize, as they pass before us, as partakers of a common nature with ourselves. What can be more gratifying to a rational curiosity than to watch the movements of the human heart, in trying and critical situations, and in conditions of life, dissimilar among themselves, as well as different from any with which we have been conversant. What so entertaining to the fancy, as to transport ourselves to distant ages, review customs and modes of thought, and seats of empires, which the hand of time has changed, and mark the effects produced upon the human character by institutions, which have passed away, to be revived no more—to sit as it were, on the brink of the stream of time, and gaze upon the various objects, great and small—kings and conquerors, mighty cities and empires, philosophers and their systems, statesmen and their schemes of policy, and an endless flotilla of minor things—as they are borne along by the swift current towards that boundless ocean, to which all that is earthly tends. Who, whether man or woman, young or old, that has any capacity for reflection, would turn away from a position, where he can indulge in a reverie, at once so instructive and delightful, to follow the ignis fatuus of fiction through a land of spectres and furies, obscene phantoms and “goblins damned.”

An acquaintance with history, useful to all, is most important to men in public stations. The injuries which mankind have suffered from those entrusted with the management of their affairs, have been so grievous, as to give to the very name of office a malignant signification. The sentiment has become prevalent among the people of all nations, that no sooner is a man elevated to power, than he may be expected to use it with a special eye to his own private interests, regardless of the public. Authority and patriotism are thought incompatible. That there has been given, in fact, too much ground for such a sentiment, is undeniable. Yet, every candid judge of human nature and of the course of events, must give, I apprehend, more credit to public men for patriotic intentions than they generally have received. Why should rulers hate their subjects? Why should we suspect a man of the design to wreck the vessel, the moment he is honored with a station at the helm? The people surely, ought at least, to have the credit of being faithful to themselves, and of honestly endeavoring to promote their own interests. Yet, this is more, a great deal, than could be fairly allowed *them*, were they to be judged by the tendency of their measures. The truth is, that rulers have inflicted injury upon their subjects, and the people upon themselves, rather through error than design: and they have been in error, because ignorant of history. The interests of nations depend on

the joint operation of so many different causes, and the effect of public measures is often so entirely opposite to what could reasonably have been anticipated, as to render the business of government in the highest degree complicated and difficult. All, whether rulers or people, are apt to have in view, the immediate effects of any proposed scheme of policy, rather than its remote consequences, though the former may be inconsiderable compared with the latter. Few, indeed, are capable of viewing remote consequences at all, and none, without the light derived from experience, the only safe guide in every thing concerning the government, trade and policy of nations. Theories of government formed on reasonings *a priori* are sure to be fallacious, if not wild and visionary, however wise the heads in which they originate. Those of Plato, Sir Thomas Moore, Harrington and Locke, are striking examples. Those constitutions and forms of policy, which have proved salutary in their operation, have not been the offspring of human wisdom employed in laborious thought to give them birth, but have been formed gradually; one piece being suggested after another, by some pressing exigency, and retained or rejected afterwards, as found useful or otherwise on sufficient experiment.

A prudent regard to history is, however, as widely different from submission to the authority of precedent, as it is from the presumptuous spirit of inconsiderate innovation. The great advantage to be derived, by the statesman, from consulting the experience of the past, would be lost, if he were not permitted to reject what is faulty, as well as to adopt what is good, in the practice of preceding generations, and also to modify what he adopts, so as to suit the changes which time and human improvements may have effected in the state of society. It was on these principles that the sages proceeded, who framed the constitution of our government: they retained whatever was found to be expedient in the government of other nations, accommodating it at the same time to the end in view, and to whatever was peculiar in our condition in this new world. They did not extend their views further back than to those periods of the world to which English history reaches: nor, for their purpose, was it necessary. Yet, in many things interesting to our policy and prosperity as a nation, much useful information might be derived from the writings of more remote antiquity. The field of remark which here opens, is too large to be explored, in the most general and cursory manner, on the present occasion. Yet, I cannot pass it by without remarking the great similarity, in their modes of warfare, that there is between some ancient nations, and the savages which, at different times, committed such ravages upon the infant settlements of this country. It has often painfully occurred to me, that had those who conducted military operations against them, been acquainted with what Xenophon has written on the modes of war among the Greeks and Persians, it had been well for themselves and the brave men whom they commanded. They never would have suffered themselves to be surprized, at least, in their en-

campments. Lest, however, among my praises of history, it should occur to some who hear me, that there is one piece of ancient history that I have not read, the story of Hannibal and Phormio, and as my pursuits in life have not made me much acquainted with the undesirable business of carnal warfare, I would only say, on the subject in general, that if our fellow citizens were but tolerably acquainted with the terribly instructive lessons, on the subject of war, with which history so much abounds, they would try to have as little to do with it as possible, and especially with civil war, which concentrates in itself the sum and essence of all earthly calamities.

History, it is probable, had not its origin in any foresight of the advantages to which it is subservient, but in a wise provision, which nature has made, in the instinctive propensities of the human mind, for the transmission of knowledge. Old age is communicative, and youth, inquisitive: and the happy junction of these opposite qualities forms a channel, through which the experience of the past is made to flow into and enrich the future. One who has spent the vigor of his days among great and important transactions, feels a peculiar gratification, in the decline of life, in calling them up again to his remembrance. The scenes with which he was conversant, while yet his energies were unimpaired, are more intimately present to him than those with which he is now surrounded. The illusions of imagination, which brighten the prospects of youth, have furnished a delightful theme to the poet and the philosopher; they are, probably, no less attendant upon the retrospect of the past, which serves to cheer the evening of life. Anxiety always mars our enjoyment of the present: but, when what was doubtful in the undertaking has become certain in the event, we look back upon it with pleasure. Time gives to things the mellow coloring and gentle outline of a distant landscape. What was painful is either forgotten, or becomes pleasant in the remembrance; and though it has often been remarked, and perhaps truly, that few have been so happy as to wish to live their lives over again, yet none are ever tired of reverting to past scenes, except the guilty. When the haven is in view, the weather-beaten mariner, delights to recount the toils he has endured, and the dangers he has escaped. Nor do the young attend with emotions less delightful to the narratives of the old. How often have our youthful fancies been thrown into a delirium of extacy, while we listened to the recital of the incidents of the revolutionary war—the perils, the sufferings, and the triumphs of that eventful period!

The first essays of history consisted, doubtless, in oral narratives of this kind: and, before the invention of written language, there was no other way to distinguish the terms employed in the rehearsal of some great event, the memory of which the narrator wished to go down to after ages, than by giving them an arrangement and pronunciation different from those employed in ordinary discourse. This was poetry. One of the most lofty pieces of poetical com-

position, as well as the most ancient, is an historical commemoration of the passage of the Israelites over the Red Sea, and the destruction of their pursuers beneath its returning waves, composed by Moses and sung, on that great occasion. The Iliad is the recital of a series of achievements, performed by a band of heroes confederated for the accomplishment of a particular purpose, and it is said to have been preserved in the memory of ancient bards for about five hundred years, before it was committed to writing. But the transmission of facts, by oral tradition, at best uncertain, became still more so, by being associated with poetry. For the poet, finding that his power to give pleasure depended, less upon the facts embodied in his narrative, than on the effect of regular numbers upon the ear, and the charms of an highly ornamented style upon the imagination, was under the constant temptation of adding to it new embellishments; till, at length, his facts were lost in the mass of surrounding fiction. Thus the muses, the daughters of memory, by degrees forsook the service of their venerable parent, and found a more pleasing employment under the indulgent rule of imagination. Poetry now fell into discredit, as a voucher of past transactions; and monuments, medals and anniversary ceremonies were resorted to, as the means of commemorating events. Of these, the latter are the most effectual, and their use has been consecrated by religion. But they are all exceedingly imperfect, compared with the art of letters, an art which makes, of "the grey goose quill," an instrument more powerful than the sculptor's chisel, and converts a heap of rags into a monument more noble than the pyramid.

The first history, both in point of time and importance, which the world possesses, records, not the actions of men, but the doings of Omnipotence. The Pentateuch of Moses! If it is not inspired, it is a prodigy more stupendous than any or all the miracles which it relates.

Herodotus, who flourished about the middle of the fifth century before the christian æra, Thucydides, who succeeded him, and Xenophon, who wrote about the beginning of the fourth century before Christ, have handed down to us nearly all that we know of ancient times, except what comes to us from the pen of inspiration. The works of the latter of these historians, connect the early periods of Grecian history, which are evidently obscured by fable, with the times, when the extension of the Roman power, and the cultivation of letters in Italy, prepared the way for a freer and more perfect intercourse among the nations, who were merged in that great empire; and thus, the means of procuring authentic information, were greatly multiplied. From the commencement of the second century before the christian æra, history assumes a character of comparative certainty and increasing interest. In this period, the stubborn contest between Rome and her great rival was terminated in the destruction of the latter; and the splendor of the former was increased, by introducing into it the literature and arts of conquered Greece. The century which, at its

close, introduced the Savior into the world, was illuminated throughout by a constellation of the most illustrious characters. Within the three succeeding centuries was effected the greatest revolution in the state of the world, which ever yet has taken place. Christianity, without the support of any of those causes which recommend new opinions to the acceptance of mankind, and making its way in opposition to the wealth and power of pagan Rome, after sustaining the shock of ten successive and bloody persecutions, obtained, under Constantine the Great, an establishment on the throne of the Cæsars. The Roman empire, at this period, extended, in breadth, upwards of two thousand miles, from the extreme limits of Dacia on the north, to the Tropic of Cancer, and, in length, more than three thousand, from the western ocean to the Euphrates, covering the finest part of the temperate zone, and estimated to contain upwards of sixteen hundred thousand square miles. The strength of this immense empire, it is generally supposed, was weakened by the transfer of its seat from Rome to Constantinople, an event which took place early in the third century. But a considerable time previous to this, had commenced the incursions of the northern barbarians, who, though often defeated, and often, by the wretched policy of the times, hired, by the payment of immense sums, to retire from the countries they had overrun, as often returned again, in augmented numbers, till, at length, the imperial city was taken and sacked by the Goths, under Alaric, in the beginning of the fifth century; and, at its close, the different barbarian tribes were in possession of Italy, France, Spain, and the countries in Africa bordering on the Mediterranean. The early part of the sixth century is distinguished by the rise of the Mahometan imposture, which overspread Arabia in the lifetime of its author, and continued to extend under his successors, till nearly the whole of the eastern and a considerable portion of the Western empire submitted to their dominion. On the 29th day of May, 1453, Mahomet the second, took by storm, the city of Constantinople, which, from that time, became the seat of a power, which, at one period, threatened the whole of christendom, with subjugation, and which, notwithstanding its recent humiliation, still maintains a formidable position on the map of nations. The honor of opposing a barrier to its progress in the west, belongs to the famous Charles Martel the second, of the Carlovingian dynasty, who, in a great battle fought in the heart of France, defeated the Saracens with great slaughter, and drove them across the Pyrennees.

These general facts have been mentioned for the purpose of turning your attention to certain institutions, which they served to introduce, and which have had and still continue to exert, a most powerful influence on the state of the world.

The rise of the Romish Hierarchy is one of the most wonderful and instructive themes of history. In the time of the Apostles, converts to the christian faith were organized into churches, under the care of the most experienced men of their number, who were

called elders, of whom one presided in their deliberations and took the lead in giving instruction. The addition of great numbers to their communion, which often took place in a little time, especially in cities, made it convenient to constitute several churches, still under the superintendence of the presiding elder, or presbyter of the original church, who, in consequence, assumed a place of permanent superiority over his associates in office, with the title of bishop or overseer. Example propagates itself; and in this way, even in the early part of the second century, the christian world presented the aspect of numerous clusters of congregations, attached to the jurisdiction of as many bishops, each possessing subordinate officers of its own. Such a cluster was called a diocese. Different dioceses, in order to keep up a correspondence and harmony with each other, constituted and held annual, sometimes semi-annual, meetings. The metropolis of the province was the place of meeting, and its limits the boundaries, of their associated dioceses. This was natural: but the custom gave to the bishop of the metropolis, a superiority of influence, and at length a permanent ascendancy over his brethren. This ascendancy was denoted by a name, and Metropolitan became a title, which, by the aid of management and favorable circumstances, conferred power. The same reasons which rendered it convenient for all, and desirable for the ambitious, that the churches of one district should be united in one diocese, and the dioceses of a province united under the Metropolitan, rendered it expedient that the dioceses and churches of a kingdom should be united under one council, and that this council should have its patriarch. This system, carried a degree higher, completed the ecclesiastical pyramid, and the bishop of Rome, with the title of universal, or catholic, became the apex. The concentration of power proceeded with the formation of the system, and by much the same means which ambition always employs to attain its object, especially where superstition benumbs the faculties of the understanding. One of these, as it casts light on the genius of the ages in which this astonishing system of spiritual domination was reared, deserves notice. It consisted in the following piece of logic: Peter was the chief of the Apostles, because the Savior had said, "thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church," and had committed to him the keys of his kingdom, and the power of the sword. But Peter had founded the church at Rome, and, therefore, the bishops of that city, as his successors, inherited his authority. This dialectic skill of the bishop of Rome and his votaries would not have availed, however, were it not that the logic suited the circumstances, and obtained, in the superior dignity of the imperial city, the prodigious influx of wealth which fanaticism poured into the treasury of the church of St. Peter, and the vigilant policy of her officers, substantial support.

How the spirit which actuated that policy could have derived its origin from the doctrines and example of Christ, to which it is so diametrically opposite, seems at first view, utterly unaccounta-

ble. In tracing its progress, we shall see a striking example of the subtle and stealthy manner in which corruption proceeds.

Paul, in his epistle to the converts at Corinth, a city whose commerce and wealth gave great occasion to litigation, had directed them to submit their disputes about secular matters to the arbitration of some of their own brethren, rather than to go to law about them before a heathen magistrate. The direction was excellent, and was adopted not only by them, but by the primitive christians generally. It was natural that pastors of churches, who, in times of primitive purity, were, on account of their integrity and prudence, competent, and among a rude and ignorant people, almost the only competent persons, to decide in such cases, should be, in many instances, chosen to arbitrate. The happy effects, at first, observed to result from this method made it a custom. Custom, at length, conferred a right, and the right was easily and grossly abused. Yet this abuse could not have been general, or of long continuance, so long as the custom stood on its ancient footing. But when Constantine had provided by law, that the decision of the bishop should be final, and executed by the civil magistrate, and that either party to a suit pending before a civil magistrate, might, in any stage of the process, carry it by appeal to the tribunal of the bishop; the principle of the bishop's adjudication was essentially and fatally changed. Before, his decision could be respected only when just: now, it was compulsory, and needed not justice to support it. The Emperor Valens increased, still further, this arbitrary jurisdiction of the bishop; and, in general, it may be remarked, that as the civil magistrate was weak, and needed the countenance of the church to any of his measures, or superstitions, and in awe of its censures, he was ready to confer power and privilege upon its ministers. Besides this, an ignorant and superstitious people were easily taught to believe, that, in all the contests of their priests and dignitaries with the secular authority, their cause was the cause of God: and it may give us some idea of the adroitness and success with which these sources of influence & wealth were managed, if we reflect that, in little less than half a century after the church of Rome had emerged from a bloody persecution, she arose, by the munificence of the Emperors and other opulent proselytes, to the summit of earthly grandeur. Her power was yet in its infancy: When full grown it prostrated every thing before it, and trampled in the dust, not only the sceptres of Kings and Emperors, but the reason and conscience, the hopes and fears, and the very senses of mankind.

On reflecting upon that corruption of christianity which took the form of that tremendous institution which has passed under our notice, it is obvious that two powerful causes co-operated in its production; the first, the divisions of the barbarous nations which settled down in the territories of the Roman empire, and which rendered some strong influence necessary to unite them, and second, that singular temper which characterized them, compound-

and of ignorance, superstition, ardor of feeling and wildness of imagination.

The monastic institutions, subordinate and cognate branches of the same great system, and deriving their growth from the same principles, will, if properly examined, confirm still further the truth of these remarks.

In the primitive times of persecution, many pious christians fled, some alone, and other with their families, into desert places, to shun temptations to apostacy, and enjoy the pleasures of devotion unmolested by the world. The practice continued when the motives to it had ceased, and men secluded themselves from society, not to escape persecution, but, to recommend themselves to God by voluntary poverty and penance, chastity and prayer. A reputation for superior sanctity was thus acquired; and multitudes forsook cities, colleges and the abodes of industry, to seek it in the desert. The desert was a desert no longer. Monasteries and nunneries were erected and liberally endowed by donations and bequests from infatuated mortals; many of whom, after a life of profligacy and rapine, thought, by this means, to purchase heaven. The monks assumed a peculiar dress and called each other friars, that is, brothers; thus indicating their exclusive regard for themselves. The world readily gave in to their absurd pretensions; and many an atrocious villain has, when at the point of death, ordered himself to be dressed in the Monkish garb, as a protection against the expected attack of the evil one.

In the monastic communities, superstition obtained a monstrous growth, which yielded a powerful support to the church of Rome. Their inmates, who, on account of the various rules of sanctity to which they bound themselves by oath, were called regulars, were the steady adherents of a power, which, in its turn, supported their pretensions and employed them as its ministers and emissaries. Yet, in the monastic institutions, there was some good mixed with the predominating evil. The morals of those who resorted to them, continued, for a considerable time after their first establishment, comparatively pure. They not only supported themselves by their industry, but procured the means of relief for the indigent and helpless. Their sacred character enabled them to afford a sanctuary to the oppressed, which even the lawless violence of the barbarous ages dared not violate. Their seclusion from the world gave them leisure for mutual improvement; and whatever of learning escaped the inundation of barbarism that rolled over the Roman empire, was preserved, during the dark ages, by their means. Even the piety which they cherished, though, in all cases, deeply tinged with superstition, and, in some, degenerating into downright hypocrisy, was, upon the whole, greatly preferable to the profligacy and brutal manners which every where else prevailed. And, it deserves to be noticed, that, though the different monastic orders obtained, one after another, exemption from the jurisdiction of the secular clergy, and became immediately dependent on the see of Rome, and might, therefore,

have been expected to be, as, in general, they actually were, blindly devoted to its interests; yet the spirit of resistance to the overgrown prerogatives of the Romish hierarchy, which lead the way to the glorious reformation, was enkindled in the cloister.

The observation may appear strange, but it is, nevertheless true, that the same causes which gave rise to monachism, originated an institution in many respects, totally dissimilar: I mean chivalry. The same spirit, though under different modifications, pervaded them both.

The barbarians who, under various names, overrun the Roman empire, were a military people; fierce, hardy, bold, ardent and adventurous. The chieftains, whose steps they followed from the inhospitable regions of the north, had, in general, no other authority over them than that, which is created by the possession of those qualities of mind and body, which impress with awe the minds of a rude people, personal prowess, intrepidity in danger, sagacity in council, and conduct in action. Fortune is the divinity of the unthinking; and the savage hordes, who had so often fought under the victorious banners of their chosen leader, yielded to his dictates a more ready submission, for the most part, than, in civilized communities, is given to the decisions of law. A partition of the districts which their arms had subdued, was made on the same principles, which had secured subordination in the camp. The General was the sole proprietor: his subordinate officers held lands under him, which they subdivided among their particular followers. The rent, if so it may be called, which was to be paid for land, was not money, or produce, but military service. Such, briefly, was the Feudal System, which, on the dissolution of the Roman empire, was established all over Europe—a hateful system of military aristocracy—from which the nations of the old world are not yet emancipated.

The officers holding immediately from the crown, were called barons; and under these again were ranked counts, viscounts, vavassors, captains, &c. These were the nobility. Those below the rank of nobility, were either, first; Freemen, who possessed allodial estates; or, second, villeins, a sort of renters, but transferrable with the soil which they cultivated; or thirdly, slaves, a numerous class, who had no rights, and whom their masters might put to death at pleasure, without judge or jury. The military tenant, of whatever rank, was called a vassal. He paid no tribute but service in arms. He was the companion of his lord in his sports in the field, in the feasts of his hall, and on the tribunal of judgment. He fought, mounted and equipped in coat of mail.

One of the most wonderful facts, to be found in the history of the middle ages, and which may give us some idea of the turbulence and insecurity of those wretched times, is that free men, holding allodial estates, should be found willing to exchange their condition, for that of a vassal, or even a villein. Yet nothing was more common. Under William, duke of Normandy, it was done y the whole body of the landed proprietors, in Great Britain.

In accepting a feudal grant, or benefice, the vassal, with his head uncovered, his belt ungirt and his sword and spear removed, kneeled, and placing his hands between those of his lord, promised to become his *man* thenceforward; to serve him with life and limb and worldly honor; and, in conclusion of the ceremony, received from his lord a kiss. This was called doing homage, a thing very different in our apprehensions, from *acting the man*, which the word signifies. Besides this, the vassal took an oath of fidelity, or, as it was called, swore fealty to his lord; by which he bound himself to maintain the honor of his lord and of his family, to lend him his horse in battle, if he should be dismounted, to go into captivity for him as an hostage, if he were taken prisoner, and to do for him all sorts of deferential service. Besides the great duties of fealty and service, the vassal was bound to render others that were incidental. He paid a relief, that is a premium on taking possession of his estate, and a fine upon alienation, that is, a premium when he sold it. His estate was subject to escheat, in other words, it reverted to the lord, in default of heirs; and it was liable to forfeiture upon violation of fealty, of which the lord was to be the judge. Aids or contributions were levied by the lord, on his vassal, on any urgent occasions. In England these were reduced, by Magna Charta to three; when the lord's oldest son was to be knighted, his oldest daughter married, or himself redeemed from prison. During his minority, the vassal was under wardship to his lord, to be educated, or rather trained to arms, under his direction; the lord being in the meantime, entitled to the profits of his ward's estate. Another feudal right, respected his female vassals, the exercise of which, however, they would not, in all cases regard, as an intolerable grievance: it consisted in providing them with husbands, whom they were not at liberty to reject, but by the payment of a fine, or a bona fide declaration, that they were above sixty years of age. We are surprised to find that the condition of a vassal, encumbered as it was, by all these burdens, should have been preferred to that of a free man, or allodial proprietor. But our surprise will cease, when we consider that, in those times of military ascendancy, the independent proprietor was always exposed to the rapacity of men in power, over whom laws had no control, and who had under them, hordes of savage vassals, as rapacious as themselves; that his possessions were liable to be pillaged, sometimes by a foreign enemy, but, more frequently, by the partizans of private warfare; and, that, surrounded continually by a host of miscreants, who esteemed war as pastime, and plunder as lawful gain, he had no resource, but in the protection of some neighboring castle; which, of course, he could not obtain, but on condition of vassalage to its proprietor. In those times of violence many were compelled to become slaves. Urged by famine, which frequently prevailed, many sold their liberty for bread; others lost it by debt; some by crime, and more in war. Many were reduced to this sad condition, by failing to attend upon military expeditions of the king, the penalty of which

was a fine called heriban, with the alternative of perpetual servitude.

The mode of deciding controversies under this horrible system, was of a piece with the rest. To determine what was just and right, by a careful examining of witnesses and sifting out the truth, from a mass of conflicting testimony, and by a reference to statute books, or the dictates of natural justice, was a manner of proceeding, that did not comport with the genius of the feudal system. The arrogance of brute force and the stupidity of superstition, suggested a shorter, easier, and, as was supposed, a more infallible method, the judicial combat. The parties fought; and the overthrow, or death, of one or the other, made known the decision of God. A party to the cause, might challenge a witness to combat, before his testimony was delivered, or he might challenge, and fight the judges, or the first one of their number who should decide against him; and if virtuous, the decision was in his favor: and in those cases none dared to refuse the challenge.

The aged, the infirm, and the female sex, it is obvious, would have to submit to every species of outrage and injury from the strong and those who were expert in the use of weapons. These were allowed, therefore, to contend by proxy, and to employ champions—an odd sort of lawyers—to maintain their rights. To ecclesiastics, the same privilege was granted. That such a state of things tended to inflame the “*amor pugnae*,” the fighting propensities, which, if we may judge from facts, are, in all circumstances, strong in human nature, is too obvious to need a remark. But it had other consequences which were not so direct, but far more fortunate. It produced refinement of manners. For the weak, unable to defend themselves, and finding no protection in innocence, sought it in the strength of the powerful. Hence those arts of respect and deference, by which only the favor of the strong could be gained. If there is any generous feeling in the breast of a man, it will be excited by the view of the helpless imploring his interference. In this proud situation, the feudal lords and persons distinguished for their spirit and prowess, were often placed. They felt honored by the affecting appeals which were often made to their generosity, and soon discovered that to redress the wrongs of the injured, and to protect the innocent, was the readiest way to increase both their power and reputation. Lofly, generous and humane sentiments would be thus frequently called into exercise. The tone of feeling thus produced, was raised still higher by female influence. This, under all circumstances, has no small agency in the formation of the character of man. Each sex seems to be formed by nature to admire those qualities which distinguish the other; the male, the softer and more gentle attributes of woman; the female, the sterner properties of man. And, in that state of improvement which lies in the middle, between the rudeness of savage life, and the refinement of highly cultivated society, there is no form which so readily captivates the female eye, as that of the plumed warrior. The northern nations

seem always to have treated the female sex with greater tenderness and respect, than are usually paid to them by barbarians: but when their taste and manners became more refined; when their females began to gratify that love of ornament, which is instinctive in the sex, and to heighten their native charms by the use of those elegant productions, which commerce began to minister to the wants of luxury; when the rich furs of the north, the gay silks of the east and the jewels and gold of the south, began to illuminate the halls of the feudal chieftain, while the music of the bard added inspiration to the entertainment, woman rose, on the tide of enthusiastic feeling, to her throne, in the imagination and the hearts of assembled heroes. The infusion of gallantry into the composition of martial qualities and lofty sentiments which distinguished the feudal nobility, constituted the spirit of chivalry.

It is not easy for us, who live in these dull times, to understand the nature of that romantic feeling, in the midst of which, female beauty was enshrined. It was not love, though it sometimes degenerated into that passion. Far less was it the sentiment of platonic friendship. It belonged more to the imagination than the heart, and partook rather of the nature of devotion, than of any earthly affection. Its object was always a goddess, and her worship consisted, not in offerings of sighs and amatory songs, but of the trophies of valor and laurels plucked from the edge of danger. The religion of Rome was a religion of imagination: her business was war; and the spirit of chivalry was allied to both. The knights of the duke of Burgundy, when devoting themselves to a crusade, connected in their vow, the names of God, the virgin mother, and the ladies, adding even the peacock and the pheasant, birds, which, I know not for what reason, were esteemed sacred. And, we are told that Louis II, duke of Bourbon, when instituting the order of the golden shield, enjoined it upon his knights, to honor above all, the ladies, and not permit any one to slander them, "because from them, after God, comes all the honor that man can acquire."

The order of knighthood obtained distinguished honor, under the feudal system, and was one of the most important institutions which kept alive the spirit of chivalry. The ceremony of receiving arms, at the age of manhood, is mentioned by Tacitus, as a custom among the ancient Germans. It prevailed, indeed among all the northern nations, and seems to have given rise to the institution of knighthood. It was considered, at first, purely military, and its honors were confirmed by a stroke of the sword, to intimate that this was the last insult that the person so dubbed, could in honor, receive. But during the time of the crusades, when ideas of romance, war and religion, were so strangely blended in the minds of men, and when the institution was in its utmost vigor, it came to be considered as partaking more of a sacred than of a martial character. It was conferred by a priest: and the candidate for its honors, previous to investiture, passed whole nights in

prayer in a church, received the sacrament, bathed, was clad in a white robe, his sword was consecrated and blessed; and ever after, at mass when the gospel was read, the knight held his sword drawn, to signify his readiness to fight for the honor of his religion and in support of the gospel.

Tilts and tournaments were the occasions when the knight was in his glory, and the spirit of chivalry was raised to its highest pitch. Imagine a space to be enclosed, and a brilliant circle of nobility and beauty collected around, as spectators. Clad in steel, and bearing shields emblazoned with the insignia of their respective mistresses, the combatants, mounted on their steeds, rush to the conflict of honor. There is a breathless suspense while the combat hangs doubtful. At length the thundering shout, "Honor to the brave," proclaims the conqueror; who is led amidst the din of martial music, to receive the prize, from the fair hand of the delighted and envied object of his devotion. The moment was one of extacy, and the honor it conferred, would be maintained by the successful champion, at the sacrifice of an hundred lives, were they in his power. Full of military ardor, elated by a high sense of personal dignity, and urged by a romantic spirit of devotion and gallantry, he was ready for any bold adventure, in which new honors might be gained. These sentiments characterized, in some degree, all the feudal nobility, but they were the life and soul of knighthood. A true knight was loyal, valiant, courteous and munificent, faithful to all his engagements, tacit or express, to friend or foe; ceremonious in his deportment, tenacious in the extreme of the point of honor, generous to a fault to a conquered enemy, profuse in his liberality, especially to minstrels, pilgrims and the poorer members of his own order, possessed of a lively sense of justice, but without much discrimination, and ardently indignant against wrong. But with these great and splendid virtues, he was also, generally speaking, dissolute and profligate, haughty and overbearing, rash, vindictive and supremely devoted to the false glory of war. In short, his good and bad qualities, may be seen at once, as portrayed in the character of Achilles, and preserved in Homer's immortal verse. They have been condensed, by the great master of the Roman lyre, into two lines, with more spirit than justice; for the darkness of the picture is not relieved by the slightest illumination of any good quality:

"Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,

"Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis"

"Intrepid, fierce, of unforgiving rage,

"Like Homer's Hero, let him spurn all laws,

"And by the sword alone, assert his cause."

The spirit of chivalry is so exactly exhibited in an incident reported by Joinville, that I shall close this sketch, by repeating it. A poor knight asked, on his knees, of Henry the Liberal, Count of Champagne, as much money as would serve to marry his two daughters. One Arthault de Nogent, a rich burgess, who was

standing by, said to the petitioner, "My lord has already given away so much, that he has nothing left." "Sir villain!" said Henry, "you do not speak the truth, saying I have nothing left, when I have yourself. Here, sir knight, I give you this man, and warrant you possession of him." The knight seized the burgess by the collar, and did not allow him his liberty, till he had paid him his ransom, five hundred pounds.

The influence of the love of war and a misguided zeal in religion, the two principal ingredients in the spirit of chivalry, displayed themselves in a series of extravagant undertakings, which began near the close of the eleventh century, and continued to be prosecuted through the space of two centuries, and which, after the sacrifice, as has been computed, of not less than six millions of human lives, on the part of the Europeans alone, ended in nothing. I refer to the crusades.

An opinion, the origin of which, though exceedingly curious and instructive, it is not necessary on this occasion, to trace, had taken possession of the public mind, that the church of Rome possessed a fund of merit, constituted out of a surpluse of good and pious deeds, on the part of her numerous saints and martyrs, which might be dispensed to such as, conscious of the defect of their own goodness, felt their need of supplementary aid. The redundancy on the one hand might supply the deficiency on the other. Penance was the appointed channel through which the communication was to be made. But as this was painful to the sufferer, and useful to nobody, it was suggested that the payment of money, or the performance of pilgrimage might answer the purpose. Under the influence of these strange and ridiculous opinions, thousands were in the habit of visiting the holy sepulchre, at Jerusalem. Early in the eleventh century, this holy place fell into the possession of the Turks, a fierce people, who hated and despised the christians, and treated the pilgrims with every species of imposition and insult. The report of such indignities, spread abroad by these fanatics, on their return home, kindled a flame of indignation and revenge, all over Europe. About the same time, the belief that the end of the world was at hand, generally prevailed; and the Savior and Judge of the world, it was expected, would make his second appearance at Jerusalem. It would be a disgrace to his professed followers, that on such an occasion, the very place should be found in the possession of unbelieving Turks.—Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of Constantinople, implored at the same time, the aid of the pope against the Turks, who threatened his capital. These causes combined their influence, and excited the public mind to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. Peter the hermit, his feet and head bare, his meagre body wrapped in a coarse garment, mounted on an ass, passed from province to province, rousing the people by his impassioned eloquence to the holy war. Miracles were wrought and prophecies uttered, in abundance. The banner of the cross was unfurled, and whoever resorted to it, was assured of fame, riches and power in the present

world, and eternal rewards in the next. The Vicar of Christ, called a council at Clermont. Forty thousand attended. "It is the will of God," was the universal shout. Barons, counts, knights, monks, priests, all orders, even women and children, prepared to march for the holy land. The 15th of August, 1096, had been fixed upon in the council, for the departure of the crusaders. But the impatient multitude set out early in the spring. Peter, the hermit and Gualtier sans avoir, or, Walter the pennyless, commanded. The promiscuous rabble took their course, guided by a goose and a goat, which were thought to be inspired, along the banks of the Danube. Multitudes perished in the forests of Hungary; and the residue, to the number of 300,000 were overwhelmed by the Turkish arrows, and their bones piled into a pyramid on the plains of Nice. These, however, afforded no fair specimen of the armies that followed, which were composed of the chivalry of the age, and commanded by the most gallant and skilful leaders. In their first campaign, a considerable part of lesser Asia and all Syria and Palestine, submitted to their victorious arms.

But these countries were remote; an active and warlike enemy was on their borders, the Greeks, who first implored the assistance of their western brethren, became jealous of their successes and turned against them. The crusaders themselves, drawn from so many different states, were not always united in their measures, and the conquests they had gained, could not be held, but at a vast expense of life and money. Yet, such was the enthusiastic pertinacity with which the people of Europe adhered to their object, that it was not abandoned till after five successive crusades, made at intervals, through the course of two hundred years.

A comparison between the different institutions which we have just been, in a very cursory manner, reviewing, could we pursue it into details, would afford abundant matter of amusing and instructive speculation. Though so exceedingly different and even opposite in their external features, they were pervaded by the same spirit, and sprung from the same original cast of character. The virtues and vices of the monk and of the knight, however differently modified by circumstances, were shoots of the same stock. Simon, the stylite seems, at first view, a very different sort of being from the lion hearted Richard; and he would, probably, be thought extremely fanciful, who should attempt to have a resemblance between the flagellants and the followers of Godfrey of Bouillon. Yet there is a resemblance. The same persevering temper, which, under the influence of superstition, directed in a particular way, would enable a man to remain for upwards of thirty years, night and day, summer and winter, on the top of a pillar, till he stiffened into a skeleton, or that, if prompted by the sympathetic action of enthusiasm upon a multitude, would lead them to whip each other to death, by way of penance, would, under the guidance of martial feelings, induce them to march half round the globe, to find an enemy with whom they might fight for tombs and relics. The shield and spear of the knight, and the

altars of the monastery, afforded protection to the suppliant on the same principle. The devotion which paid homage to the Virgin Mary, was substantially the same with that which adored, those earthly goddesses, who were to be found in every village. If monachism had its legends, chivalry had its romances; and the same state of mind, which could see a meritorious efficacy in penance and pilgrimage, could recognize the judgment of God in the issue of a single combat. Whether the enthusiasm of chivalry, or the superstition of monachism was the least corrupting to public morals, it would be difficult to determine. The radical vice of the latter was fraud, of the former lawless force. The one filled the church with legends, relics, and indulgences; the other deposited in the very foundations of the state, the principles of a military aristocracy. The reformation of Luther and his coadjutors, has not yet delivered religion from the corruptions of superstition; and notwithstanding the repeated struggles of patriotism, aided by the progressive influence of science and civilization, the liberties of Europe still continue to languish under the hateful relics of feudal oppression. The connection of chivalry with religion, or the mutual penetration, rather of each system by the other, completed the corruption of both. Chivalry employed the force of the sword, the only logic with which it was acquainted, to evince the truth of religion, and religion baptized the votaries of chivalry in the blood of heretics. And, unhappily for the interests of truth, the voice of modern history, instead of making an impartial distribution of blame between the two, has heaped it all on the head of religion: whereas the massacres which have been charged to her account, were owing to that native thirst for blood which characterized, from the first, the barbarians of the north, and which was afterwards ennobled by the institutions of chivalry, and sanctioned by a gloomy superstition, which had nothing of christianity but the name. It is happy for us, that a wide ocean and the revolution of '76 have, in a great degree, separated us from the influence of feudal rights and superstitious institutions, and it would be happier still, were the separation more complete. The absurd practice of duelling, and the prevailing taste for intoxicating liquors, proclaim, at once, our shame and our descent; and although the relics of saints, and pilgrimages to the holy land, never had any value among us, yet there are other things, deemed pious, which must be supplanted by knowledge and moral virtue, before we can truly boast of a complete deliverance from the lingering traces of superstition. On the other hand, it is but just to observe, that while we have separated ourselves from the mass of those evils in church and state which grew out of the feudal system and a corrupt hierarchy in the old world; it is exceedingly unfair, that the odium which is justly due to *them*, should be transferred to things of a directly opposite nature among us, though some, to serve their purpose, should choose to call them by the same name. Why should protestants, for instance, be censured for what belongs to the church of Rome? Why should the detes-

tation which is due to a system of worldly domination, under the name of an established religion, be inflicted upon religion itself, without an establishment? Why should the spirit of the reformation, to which we are indebted for our civil as well as our religious liberties, be branded with the odious name of that tyranny which it abhors? Why should that charity which gives the bible to the poor, be confounded with its antagonist principle, that would lock up the sacred volume from all but the clergy? Why involve in indiscriminate condemnation, that devotion which springs from light, loves the light, and seeks to diffuse the light, with that which boasts of ignorance as its mother? Why should the name of priests, which has been rendered odious by the practice of infidels, ministering at the altars of a secularized hierarchy, be affixed to those who have protested against that hierarchy and abjured all its abominations? The evils of a feudal aristocracy have been purged from our civil polity, and we have wisely left the prejudices which they produced along with them. Why then should we listen to alarmists in religion, who have imported prejudices from Europe, or who love to inflame them when imported by others, which, though not unfounded in that part of the world, have no object—no, not the shadow of the shade of an object here?