

ing work of his life, was, to make experiment and observation the means of attaining truth, to lead men away from the framing of theories to the study of facts, to proclaim that nature is our grand field for observation, and that the only sure pathway to knowledge and discovery was by a faithful investigation of her pages. In order fully to understand the work which Bacon did, it will be necessary to consider the age preceding that in which he arose. The ages are linked together; they are dependent upon each other. It is with the ages of history, as with the different periods in human life. The child is father to the man; the influences which are at work in childhood and youth go to give colour and shape to the character of the man. So in history. The influences and forces which are at work in one age go to determine the character of the age which succeeds. And as it is with ages, so is it with the great events in any age. The events are linked together. The one grows out of the other. The greatest events which transpire, which change sometimes the whole face of society and perpetuate their influence down to the remotest generations, are usually brought about by causes and forces which are small, insignificant, and widely separated, just as in the world of nature around us the mightiest agencies and forces derive their might from the operation of apparently small and unnoticed causes sometimes far removed from each other. It was so with respect to the event which we are now about to consider—the appearance of Bacon and the application of that system of philosophy with which his name stands associated.

In order to ascertain the causes and influences which brought the event about, and to form a correct estimate of the work which he did, we must go back a few centuries and

consider the condition in which the world then was.

The fall of the Roman Empire, in 476, A.D., marked the commencement of a period of thick darkness. In that memorable year, that empire which had so long held the supremacy among the nations of the earth and where met in a focus all the civilization and refinement of the world, passed away, as a mist of the morning, before the prowess of the barbarians of the north. Towns and cities were destroyed, and their gorgeous temples razed to the ground, fair kingdoms were ravaged, and desolation and death followed the steps of the ruthless foe. The result was that a universal darkness began to spread over Europe, learning began to decline, and everywhere were seen the unmistakable signs of mental and moral decay and decrepitude. The most gross ignorance prevailed among all classes of the people. We read, for instance, upon good authority, "that scarcely a single person was to be found in Rome itself, who knew the first elements of letters; that not one priest of a thousand in Spain could address a common letter of salutation to another; that it was rare to find a layman, of whatever rank, who knew how to sign his own name." Side by side with this wide-spread ignorance, the grossest immoralities were practised, the darkest vices prevailed, the vast mass of the people were sunk in the most pitiable moral and spiritual degradation, all liberty of thought was proscribed, every trace of mental or moral vigour seemed to have vanished away, a dreary winter set in upon the world, the streams of thought were congealed, and a spirit of moral decay and death brooded over the land. Superstition grows upon the soil of ignorance; and it is not surprising to find, in the age of which we speak, many forms of superstition thriving. The appearance of a comet,