

THE "DARK AGES"

REALLY CLEANING WITH RADIANCE

In Science, Art, and all that Pertains to Mental Advancement.

What's in a name? In the subject of this paper, quite a good deal. At the outset it might as well be stated that there is a serious difference about the name itself. Many excellent authorities would prefer to style the period about to be examined "The Middle Ages," rather than "The Dark Ages."

They may be summed up in the following: The irruption of the barbarians from the North, and the invasion of the S races from the East; the introduction of the feudal system; the limited number of books; and the great, almost insurmountable difficulty of spreading knowledge prior to the time that the art of printing was invented.

Let us look for a moment at the state of things after the downfall of the Roman Empire. We shall be thus enabled to see the nature of the great work and its extent that the Church had on hand.

Like a rotten colossus the mighty structure of pagan power and pagan civilization crumbled to pieces when the shock of barbarian invasion burst upon it.

From the fifth to the eleventh century the Church labored unceasingly for the conversion of the new races. She saw them enter nation by nation, within the pale of Christian civilization; her gentle spirit softened their fierceness and thirst for bloodshed; their savage, uncouth manners were improved; fraternal charity and the principles of the Christian religion were instilled into their minds and hearts.

Here it will not be out of place to cite the language of non-Catholic writers as to the influence of the Church, and it was the only influence at work during those years. "Though seemingly enslaved, the Church," says a writer in the North American Review (July, 1846), "was in reality the life of Europe."

ad some rude justice; the ruler, learned faith and obedience. Let us not cling to the superstition which teaches that the Church has always upheld the cause of tyrants.

THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

And another Protestant reviewer, of this period, writes—"From the fifth to the ninth century, the barbarian element of force and violent movement were predominant, because horde followed horde, as wave follows wave, and one race of the conquerors had scarcely established itself in a country when it was forced to make room for another.

That the Church put forth strenuous efforts to keep alive the sacred flame of science and to promote the instruction of youth is evident to the close student of history. No one pretends that during the dark ages knowledge was widely diffused among the masses of the people as in latter times.

IN THE SAME PERSON.

We need not be surprised if men went so far as to even boast of their want of learning. Deeds and legal instruments of this period are found which terminate thus: "And the aforesaid Lord has declared that he did not know how to sign his name, owing to his being a nobleman."

Surely it must have been an herculean task for the Church, and no other power was capable of doing it, to mould and change a state of society like this. It required centuries to do it. But the work was accomplished in the end. It became as who live in a more enlightened and progressive age to grow impatient of the slow process, or to be too ready to censure the Church which was, in truth, the savior of society during the darkest period of the Dark Ages.

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ninth and tenth centuries—the darkest period in every country of Europe. Charlemagne founded public schools in France; Alfred, the Great, in England. The schools and colleges of Ireland were so well known, at this time, for their learning and piety as to merit for her people

THE FLOOD TITLE

of the "Insula doctorum et sanctorum." Verigil, who became bishop of Salzburg; Shell, abbot of Kildare; Dungal, lecturer at Pavia, and others no less noted, were Irish scholars trained in native schools.

Nor were France and Germany without their schools. Flourishing seats of learning were to be found in the former at Rheims, Chartres, Tours, and Dijon; the abbey of Fleury and the monastery of Bec were widely known. It was over this school of Bec that Lanfranc and his more illustrious pupil, Anselm, presided.

The Church succeeded in diminishing the evils of serfdom; she got rid of the horrid superstition that forced the accused to submit to the ordeal of fire and water to purge themselves of guilt; she established the right of asylum for fugitives; and above all, as the great means of weaning the minds and hearts of men from the atrocities of what was almost constant warfare, and thus prepare them for the cultivation of the arts and virtues of peace, she established the "Truce of God."

Now, if all this was done,—making full allowance for the great difficulties that stood in the way,—it constitutes a record of which the Church need not be ashamed.

Lord Tennyson, in a fitful mood, calls our own times dark:

Most persons refuse to accept the qualifying word as applicable to this present age. And may not some persons be permitted to believe that, in the light of true history, the "Dark Ages" are not quite as black as they are painted in the popular mind; and that the Church Catholic was then, as it is now, and always shall be, the light of the world?

MORGAN M. SHEEDY.

A Chief of Police. There is no body of men more liable to suffer from exposure than the police. But as an example of how they get rid of their maladies, the following is cited: Green Island, N.Y., U.S.A., Feb. 11, 1889: "I suffered with neuralgia in the head, but found instant relief from the application of St. Jacobs Oil, which cured me." E. P. BULLINGER, Chief of Police.

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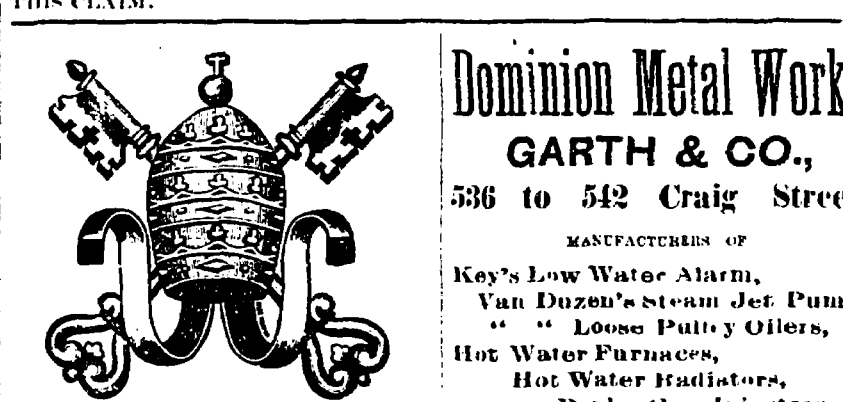
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CHURCH ORNAMENTS. Lord Tennyson, in a fitful mood, calls our own times dark: "For these are the new dark ages of the infidel press."

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