

which everywhere prevailed. From the conquest of Alexandria by the Saracens, at the beginning of the seventh century, at which date the Egyptian papyrus ceased to be imported into Europe, to the close of the tenth, there were no materials for writing except parchment, which was so expensive as to prevent its use for purposes of literature. As a result of this, the practice originated of erasing manuscripts in order to place others on the same skin. The effect of this was, that the writings or recorded observations of many ancient authors were completely lost, and no sooner was the material for thought accumulated, than it was in danger, from this very cause, of being consigned to eternal oblivion. The Church, then, was the sole light of the age, a light whose rays were exceedingly refracted in their passage through the atmosphere of ignorance, which, like a thick cloud, overhung the land. Objects of thought, facts and truth, were thus made to occupy positions, and to assume forms which, in reality, they did not possess. Truth was distorted and fact misrepresented. The Church did not educate, in the true sense of the word. The tendency of her teaching was to cramp the mental and moral energies, by forcing them into grooves of her own creation; to destroy that wholesome liberty of thought and moral self-reliance which is the inevitable result of all true education, and to promote a mental timidity and slavery, destructive to all mental or moral progress. As her teaching was sectarian, so her method was unnatural. She enforced her own tenets upon the child-age, and compelled assent thereto, irrespective of any object save the establishment of her own authority and the extension of her boundaries. Light, which did not emanate from her, was darkness. Knowledge from any other source was ignorance. Truth, when not seen through her glasses, was falsehood. The age, as yet, however, was too young to realize its position; too ignorant to resist her authority or question her prerogative. The ignorance of the age rendered it submissive; its childhood promoted obedience. Ignorance rarely thrives alone; it is a weed which reproduces itself in a thousand hateful forms, which defy almost every attempt at eradication. Superstition is one of its offspring, which along with its cause, thrives best on the soil of childhood. We have already mentioned that science was proscribed by the Church as inconsistent with revelation, and its pursuit strictly discountenanced. All facts were received through ecclesiastical spectacles, and forced to fit into preconceived tenets and beliefs. There was a prevailing opinion towards the latter end of the age which we are just now considering, that the millenium was near at hand, and the end of the world rapidly approaching. The dark shadows of universal ignorance which everywhere prevailed, no doubt, gave origin to such a gloomy prediction. Certain signs in the heavens also appeared, which, being explicable in no other way, were regarded as omens of the approach of the final day mentioned in Revelation, and there associated with similar appearances. An army, marching under Otho I, is said to have been so terrified by an eclipse of the sun that it dispersed on all sides in the wildest confusion. All charters began with the following words, "As the world is now draw-