

THOUGHTS ON THE CRUSADES.

ALL nations revere and cherish the birthplace of their illustrious heroes. England has Stratford-on-Avon; the United States, Mount Vernon. It is therefore but fitting that all Christendom should hold the land consecrated by the presence of the Redeemer of the world, as the most sacred spot on earth. And from the earliest ages Christians have believed that this land should be free of access to all the people.

Pilgrims from the West have deemed it a great privilege to be able to do penance for their sins on the very spot where Our Lord redeemed them. Constantine the Great and his mother St. Helena visited Jerusalem and built many beautiful temples in honor of the Saviour. Robert of Normandy did penance in the streets of the Holy City. Before long, however, the Christians were denied the privilege of visiting and praying at the different shrines in Palestine.

Omar the leader of the Mussulmans conquered the Holy Land in A.D. 638, and he not only persecuted those who lived in Jerusalem but he also prevented as far as he was able those who ventured into the city from other countries. Cruel as were the persecutions under Omar and his immediate successors they became intolerable under the rule of the Seljukian Turks. Three Roman pontiffs, Sylvester II, Gregory VII and Victor III tried in vain to end these persecutions. It was reserved to Urban II to start in motion the Crusades.

To attempt to enumerate the many salutary and lasting results that have followed from these religious wars were as unnecessary as "to gild refined gold or paint the lily." Where is the Christian, whether Catholic or Protestant, who does not admire the noble character of Peter the Hermit, whose call, like a voice from the wilderness, awakened all Europe to the actual con-

dition of affairs in Palestine and made the war-like barons forget their private feuds and band themselves under the Standard of the Cross with the cry "God wills it?"

Peter fired with indignation at the treatment he had seen his brethren receive in the Holy Land, solicited, and readily obtained permission, to preach the cause of his fellow Christians.

Later on, Urban assembled all the nobles and warriors of France in the Council of Clermont, and appealed to them with so much eloquence, that thousands immediately pledged themselves to rescue Jerusalem from the Turks. Each warrior as a sign of his vow placed a red cross on his right shoulder, and from this they came to be known as Crusaders.

Had these wars been successful not a single voice would have been raised against them, but because they failed in part, there are many who cannot be too abusive when dealing with any event connected with the Crusades. But is anyone justified in calling the wars which saved Europe from barbarism failures? What is it more than anything else that is most striking during this epoch of history? The careful student will most likely notice the almost universal prevalence of feudalism.

This remarkable system of government did much towards ameliorating the condition of the serfs in its early existence, but in the twelfth century feudalism had exceeded all bounds, and was far from being conducive to the welfare of Europe. Being absolute masters of the land the feudal lords were absolute masters of the poor people.

The Church had ever been the opponent of these landed barons though at times she apparently favored them. This seeming approval was owing to the fact, that it was impossible to overthrow them, and the Church, as a kind and thoughtful mother, ever watchful