

THE AGE OF LORD BACON.

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SECOND PAPER.

ANOTHER influence which tended to produce the same result, was the establishment of schools in different countries of Europe. In Britain and France, Spain and Germany, various schools were established to which pupils resorted from distant lands. From these light radiated, in all directions. Here lectures were given and discussions held to which throngs resorted. In one, for instance, were 30,000 pupils attending, in another, 25,000, while among the students attending another, were twenty cardinals and fifty bishops. Education is a quickener of thought and an enlarger of knowledge. Discussion is the crucible from which Truth comes forth, stripped of her dross, brighter, purer, diviner than before. But while the world was thus being enlightened by schools which soon dotted the country, there was silently taking root in the brain of an obscure German an art which was destined to revolutionize the world of letters and give it a power and permanence it never before possessed—the art of printing. Before the invention of printing, it was a difficult task to preserve or multiply books. Parchment was the only material used for writing, and as it was very expensive, the practice of erasing one manuscript in order to make room for another, became very common. Books were few in number, and what few there were, were confined to the learned. But a mighty change took

place with the invention of printing. Schools acquired an influence they never before had, books were multiplied and brought within the reach of the poorest, the blessings of knowledge were sown broadcast over the land, men's intellectual activities were awakened, and a general resurrection of mind took place. Thus did all these influences pave and prepare the way for the emancipation of the world from the moral and intellectual bondage under which it had long groaned. God ever works slowly, but surely. He prepares men for the unfolding of His purposes, and not until by a long process of training and discipline their minds are prepared to receive light, does He cause the light to shine forth to enlighten and to bless. Long ages, we have reason to suppose, rolled away, during which our earth was being prepared for the bringing forth of fruit and the support of man, ere God sent forth the fiat "Let there be light," and so two long centuries passed away ere He commands the light to shine forth by which the thick darkness of ignorance and superstition melts away, and moral verdure and beauty mantle the world. All the influences we have mentioned may be compared to so many streams which, starting from separate fountain-heads, at length converge, and melting into and mingling with each other, form one broad, deep and majestic river. Or these influences may be likened to precious seed dropped into the soil of the world. That seed was