

The Civilization of the 13th Century.



THE object which every student must propose to himself in entering upon a study of history, is not a knowledge of wars and dynasties, not a mastery of chronological tables, but rather a critical appreciation of the great movements in the economic, social, and religious condition of mankind which mark the different epochs in the life of the human race. Or, to put it more briefly, the end he has in view or ought to have in view, is an understanding of the world's growth in civilization.

In a lecture on Popular Culture given some years since by the noted scholar and statesman, John Morley, there is a simple word of advice which seems appropriate for us of the Twentieth Century, who are pretty much imprisoned in our time. It is this, "Learn not to be near-sighted in history, but look before and after." We are the mature age of the world; and hence, believe that we possess all the wisdom of the ages that have preceded us. Progress is our watchword; and to look to the past with any feeling akin to admiration, is oftentimes considered a tendency to retrogression. However, it is but a matter of simple prudence, that, from time to time, we should stop and take our bearings and see if that which we call progress is really progress, or if it is only drift.

It is my purpose, therefore, to direct your attention to a time when the world was seven centuries younger than it is to-day, and to give you as complete and faithful a picture, as I briefly can, of the civilization of the culminating years of the Middle Age—the Thirteenth Century.

Frederick Harrison justly remarks that he who would understand the Middle Age must make a special study of the Thirteenth Century. For in the Thirteenth Century is found the concentration of all that was best in mediæval life and thought. Hence a cursory survey of that century will enable us to catch something of the dominant spirit of the mediæval times—those times whose very name has been made to connote all that right thinking men must abhor in political, social, and moral life, until the more scientific method of historical research of our day has made it clear that they should be assigned a leading place in the story of the world's progress. Then again, apart from the fact that through this century we can see the whole of the Middle Age, the century itself is worthy of

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