

MEDIÆVAL LIFE IN GERMANY.

The above is the title of the public lecture delivered recently under the auspices of the Modern Language Club, by Prof. Vander Smissen, the Honorary President, in the Biological building. The lecture was illustrated by lime-light views, and the fair-sized audience present was delighted for the hour and a half, during which Prof. Vander Smissen sustained his high reputation as an interesting public lecturer.

The Middle Ages was a period characterized by courtesy, dignity and elegance of life. Not only on festive occasions did that love for display manifest itself, but, in the ordinary affairs of life, the great ladies were accustomed to wear their crown and coronets. There was no room among the upper classes for the boorish man, the *villain*, but the rules of etiquette were supreme. The spirit of chivalry, which was the natural accompaniment of such an age, showed itself either in the religious devotion, which culminated in the Crusades or in the quest of the knight for beautiful ladies. Too often it degenerated into mere sentimentality. The knight who would face every danger to show his devotion to a fair lady, often left his own wife and children at home starving. Yet examples are not wanting of noble self-sacrifice, of earnest devotion to a lofty ideal and of pure unselfish love, faithful unto death.

In Germany, in the Middle Ages, alongside of the decentralization of political life, was the centralization and authority of the ecclesiastical life. Service was the ideal of life. The individual was lost sight of in the struggle of society as a whole. The upper classes lived in the country. The duke built his castle on a high table-land, accessible only by a narrow path, which could easily be blocked against the invader. One of these fortified castles now exists as the Schlosz in Berlin, of which a picture was shown. The next illustration was that of the Wartburg, whose plan showed the Vorburg, the tilting yards, the chapel, the Hofburg, with its garden and cistern, the dungeon and the Kaminat, where the women lived, especially in the winter.

A picture of Martin Luther's room in the Wartburg, in which he had his encounter with the devil, was shown. The wall still showed traces of the ink-bottle, which Luther hurled at his adversary.

Next was shown a great hall, such as those in which the minstrels vied with each other in their performance at the banquets. These were uncomfortable rooms in winter. There were large open fire-places, but as window-glass was too scarce, the windows had to be boarded up in winter and the cracks stuffed with straw and rags to keep the cold out. Openings were cut in these boards and the

apertures covered with thin parchment. The best artificial light was from wax candles. Benches were arranged around the walls, while there were a few chairs which made your bones ache to look at them.

Prof. Vander Smissen then pointed out the mediæval character of the University building. The tower represented the same in the old castles, with its dungeon below; then there were the large halls. The eastern wing might be taken to represent the ladies' apartments; while the physical laboratory was like the kitchen, which was sometimes built as a round building, apart from the main structure. An illustration of the great fireplace in the hall of Frederick Barbarossa followed. A man of the Middle Ages in bed was the subject of the next view. The bedstead was handsomely carved, but the bed looked very uncomfortable, as it held the sleeper almost in a sitting posture. It was necessary to keep the head covered, on account of the cold, though a fire was kept going in the room.

How did people occupy their time in the Middle Ages? Boys were kept in the Kaminat until the age of seven. During this time they would play marbles, shoot birds or pummel each other, much like the boys of to-day. The end and aim of his education was to fit him for the court. Good manners were essential. Even at the age of ten he was taught to endure hunger, cold and fatigue. He served his apprenticeship at some distant court, under the supervision of some knight. He was trained in the use of arms in friendly encounters with blunt weapons, his first practical use of them being in the chase. Besides etiquette and bodily prowess, he received instruction in religion, music and languages, the Latin for religious, the French for secular purposes. Many of the men of the Middle Ages could neither read nor write, and a young man would often have to carry a love-letter around for perhaps ten days until he found a clerk who would read it and not divulge its secrets. Both sexes were taught singing and playing on the viol. The women were better educated than the men, most of them being able to read and write. The girls amused themselves in playing ball and sliding on the ice. Careful attention was given to their instruction in etiquette. They must not walk with long strides, nor sit with the knees crossed, nor address a gentleman first, nor talk with the mouth full, nor talk too much, which last admonition seemed to meet with the hearty approbation of the male members of the audience. The women were the tailors and weavers of the household. They were taught also to make simples, and dress wounds.

Dentistry in those days was relegated to the blacksmiths. Some half-dozen pictures of the costumes of the time were shown, as also one of a finger-bowl, so necessary in those days before forks were used. B.



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