

the illiteracy which consists in bidding a final farewell to books and literature the very day one graduates from school. The illiteracy of the slums is bad enough. But of all the deplorable shapes of illiteracy, the illiteracy of the supposed cultivated man is the most tragic. To have the means of knowing the best that the choicest minds have seen, and felt, and thought, and not to know it, is surely mental destitution. May God protect the land the illiterate cultivated high school boy, or the illiterate college graduate is let loose on to drag it down to the prosaic, narrow level on which they themselves are doomed to live.

William D. Howells says that he has never been able to see much difference between what is called literature and what is called life. This was, indeed, true of the Thirteenth Century. Literature then was life. The people lived in the very atmosphere of poetry. Their times may not have been quite so safe as ours, but they were at least more picturesque. If a poor French peasant of those days should come back to life in one of our dismally prosaic villages or commonplace commercial cities, I think he would lose no time in quitting earth again.

One of the commonest sights of those days was the itinerant poet, or the gaily clad minstrel, singing snatches of lays as he wandered along from hall to castle. Every place he went he was welcomed with hospitality, even at the table of the king.

Literature and life are not so intimately connected now, I believe, as they were in the Thirteenth Century days. Ours is a world that reads and writes. It has been said that we take our literature like deaf-mutes. It is simply a matter of pen and eye. The world of the Thirteenth Century was one that sang and listened. And surely words were made for tongue and ear. In those times, too, the common man had a large share in imaginative art. To-day the literature worthy of the name is of the few and for the few.

Let us glance just for a moment at the literature of the Thirteenth Century. The Catholic hymnal is, without doubt, one of the most glorious anthologies in all literature. The Thirteenth Century saw the production of some of the most notable of its masterpieces: the Dies Irae, that soul-stirring cry of terror, and guilt, and prayer for mercy; the Stabat Mater, the sublimest of all elegies. I say this though mindful of the surpassing excellence of Milton's Lycidas, Grey's Elegy, and Shelley's Adonais—the Stabat Mater even after the thousandth reading, does what they can never do, send a thrill of exquisite pain through the heart. Then there are the glorious

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