

very time when Alaric was encircling Rome with his armies, and there was no subtlety of theological metaphysics which did not kindle a deeper interest in the Christian leaders than the throes of their expiring country. The moral enthusiasm that in other days would have fired the armies of Rome with an invincible valor, impelled thousands to abandon their country and their homes, and consume the weary hours in a long routine of useless and horrible mascerations. . . . Many of the Christians contemplated, with an indifference that almost amounted to complacency, what they regarded as the predicted ruin of the city of the fallen gods. . . . The immortal past of Thermopylæ was surrendered without a struggle to the Goths. A pagan writer accused the monks of having betrayed it. It is more probable that they had absorbed or diverted the heroism that in other days would have defended it" (Ibid, 142-3). How evident it is that the subversion of the Roman, to which the darkness of the Middle Ages was so largely due, was encouraged by the policy, if not sometimes aided, by the direct efforts of the Christian Church.

The asceticism which I have mentioned was frequently followed by the opposite extreme, and the greatest licentiousness prevailed. Love feasts became scenes of drunkenness and debauchery, and as such were kept up for centuries. Commemoration of martyrs became scenes of scandalous dissipation. Thousands of the clergy while professing celibacy kept mistresses in their houses under all sorts of false but pious pretexts. Monks and virgins lived together on terms of closest intimacy, hypocritically claiming that so great was their piety that they could innocently share the same bed. Women deserted their husbands to live with new lovers. Open prostitution was common. "The world," says Hallam, "grew accustomed to dangerous alternations of extreme asceticism and gross vice, and sometimes, as in the case of Antioch, it was the most vicious and luxurious cities that produced the most numerous anchorites. . . . Public opinion was so low, that many forms of vice attracted little condemnation and punishment, while undoubted belief in the absolving efficacy of superstitious rites calmed the imagination and allayed the terrors of conscience" ("Middle Ages," p. 163).

An Italian bishop of the tenth century said that if he were to enforce the canons against unchaste people administering the rites of the Church, that duty would be reserved for boys alone; and if he were to extend the canons against bastards, they too would be excluded. At one time the clergy almost universally kept concubines, and were systematically taxed therefor. One abbot was found to have seventeen illegitimate children in one village. Another abbot kept seventy concubines. The Bishop of Liege had sixty-five illegitimate children. The nunneries were brothels; infanticide within their walls was common. Incest was so prevalent among the clergy that it was necessary again and again to enact that no priest should live with his mother or sister. Unnatural vice was common, especially among the clergy. Indeed, Mosheim, Hallam, Lecky, and other impartial writers declare that no adequate

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