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ART. I.—*Histoire de France*. Par M. MICHELET, Membre de l'Institut, Professeur d'Histoire au Collège Royal de France, Chef de la Section Historique aux Archives du Royaume. 8vo. Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Paris: 1835-42.

IT has of late been a frequent remark among Continental thinkers, that the tendencies of the age set strongly in the direction of historical enquiry, and that history is destined to assume a new aspect from the genius and labours of the minds now devoted to its improvement. The anticipation must appear at least premature to an observer in England, confining his observation to his own country. Whatever may be the merits, in some subordinate respects, of such histories as the last twenty years have produced among us, they are in general distinguished by no essential character from the historical writings of the last century. No signs of a new school have been manifested in them; they will be affirmed by no one to constitute an era, or even prefigure the era which is to come: save that the 'shadow of its coming' rested for an instant on the lamented Dr Arnold, at the close of his career; while Mr Carlyle has shown a signal example, in his 'French Revolution,' of the epic tone and pictorial colouring which may be given to literal

truth, when materials are copious, and when the writer combines the laborious accuracy of a chronicler, with the vivid imagination of a poet.

But whoever desires to know either the best which has been accomplished, or what the most advanced minds think it possible to accomplish, for the renovation of historical studies, must look to the Continent; and by the Continent we mean of course, in an intellectual sense, Germany and France. That there are historians in Germany, our countrymen have at last discovered. The first two volumes of Niebuhr's unfinished work, though the least attractive part to ordinary tastes, are said to have had more readers, or at least more purchasers, in English than in their native language. Of the remaining volume, a translation has lately appeared, by a different, but a highly competent hand. Schlosser, if not read, has at least been heard of in England; and one of Ranke's works has been twice translated: we would rather that two of them had been translated once. But, though French books are supposed to be sufficiently legible in England without translation, the English public is not aware, that both in historical speculations, and in the importance of her historical writings, France, in the present day, far surpasses Germany. What reason induces the educated part of our countrymen to *ignore*, in so determined a manner, the more solid productions of the most active national mind in Europe, and to limit their French readings to M. de Balzac and M. Eugène Sue, there would be some difficulty in precisely determining. Perhaps it is the ancient dread of French infidelity; perhaps the ancient contempt of French frivolity and superficiality. If it be the former, we can assure them that there is no longer ground for such a feeling; if the latter, we must be permitted to doubt that there ever was. It is unnecessary to discuss whether, as some affirm, a strong religious 'revival' is taking place in France, and whether such a phenomenon, if real, is likely to be permanent. There is at least a decided reaction against the infidelity of the last age. The Voltairian philosophy is looked upon as a thing of the past; one of its most celebrated assailants has been heard to lament, that it has no living representative sufficiently considerable to perform the functions of a 'constitutional opposition' against the reigning philosophic doctrines. The present French thinkers, whether receiving Christianity or not as a divine revelation, in no way feel themselves called upon to be unjust to it as a fact in history. There are men who, not disguising their own unbelief, have written deeper and finer things in vindication of what religion has done for mankind, than have sufficed to found the reputation of some of its most admired defenders. If they have

any historical prejudice on the subject, it is in favour of the priesthood. They leave the opinions of David Hume on ecclesiastical history, to the exclusive patronage (we are sorry to say) of Protestant writers in Great Britain:

With respect to the charge so often made against French historians, of superficiality and want of research, it is a strange accusation against the country which produced the Benedictines. France has at all times possessed a class of studious and accurate *érudits*, as numerous as any other country except Germany; and her popular writers are not more superficial than our own. Voltaire gave false views of history in many respects, but not falser than Hume's; Thiers is inaccurate, but less so than Sir Walter Scott. France has done more for even English history than England has. The very first complete history of England, and to this day not wholly superseded by any other, was the production of a French emigrant, Rapin de Thoyras. Of Mr Turner's really learned works on our early ages—works standing almost alone among us in extent of original research—it is, after all, the greatest merit to have served as preparatory studies for the 'Norman Conquest' of Augustin Thierry.\* The histories and historical memoirs of the Commonwealth period, never yet collected in our own country, have been translated and published at Paris in an assembled form, under the superintendence of M. Guizot; to whom also we owe the best history, both in thought and in composition, of the times of Charles I. The reigns of the last two Stuarts have been written, with the mind of a statesman and the hand of a vigorous writer, by Armand Carrel, in his '*Histoire de la Contre-Révolution en Angleterre*;' and at greater length, with much research and many new facts, by M. Mazure. To call these writings, and numerous others which have lately appeared in France, superficial, would only prove an entire unacquaintance with them.

Among the French writers now labouring in the historical field, we must at present confine ourselves to those who have narrated as well as philosophized; who have written history, as well as written *about* history. Were we to include in our survey those general speculations which aim at connecting together the facts of universal history, we could point to some which we deem even more instructive, because of a more comprehensive and far-reaching character, than any which will now fall under our notice. Restricting ourselves, however, to histo-

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\* And (we may add) for the '*Histoire de France*' of M. Michelet, who has derived important aid from Mr Turner's review of the Lancastrian period of our history.

rians in the received sense of the word, and among them to those who have done enough to be regarded as the chiefs and representatives of the new tendency, we should say that the three great historical minds of France, in our time, are Thierry, Guizot, and the writer whose name, along with that of his most important production, stands at the beginning of the present article.

To assist our appreciation of these writers, and of the improved ideas on the use and study of history, which their writings exemplify and diffuse, we may observe that there are three distinct stages in historical enquiry.

The type of the first stage is Larcher, the translator of Herodotus, who, as remarked by Paul Louis Courier, carries with him to the durbar of Darius the phraseology of the Court of Louis Quatorze;\* and, nowise behind him, an English translator of

\* ‘Figurez-vous un truchement qui, parlant au sénat de Rome pour le paysan du Danube, au lieu de ce début,

“Romains, et vous Sénat, assis pour m’écouter,”

commencerait : Messieurs, puisque vous me faites l’honneur de vouloir bien entendre votre humble serviteur, j’aurai celui de vous dire. . . . Voilà exactement ce que font les interprètes d’Hérodote. La version de Larcher, pour ne parler que de celle qui est la plus connue, n’écarte jamais de cette civilité : on ne saurait dire que ce soit le laquais de Madame de Sévigné, auquel elle compare les traducteurs d’alors ; car celui-là rendait dans son langage bas, le style de la cour, tandis que Larcher, au contraire, met en style de la cour ce qu’a dit l’homme d’Halicarnasse. Hérodote, dans Larcher, ne parle que de princes, de princesses, de seigneurs, et de gens de qualité ; ces princes montent sur le trône, s’emparent de la couronne, ont une cour, des ministres et de grands officiers, faisant, comme on peut croire, le bonheur des sujets ; pendant que les princesses, les dames de la cour, accordent leurs faveurs à ces jeunes seigneurs. Or est-il qu’Hérodote ne se doute jamais de ce que nous appelons princes, trône et couronne, ni de ce qu’à l’académie on nomme faveurs des dames et bonheur des sujets. Chez lui, les dames, les princesses mènent boire leurs vaches, ou celles du roi leur père, à la fontaine voisine, trouvent là des jeunes gens, et font quelque sottise, toujours exprimée dans l’auteur avec le mot propre : on est esclave ou libre, mais on n’est point sujet dans Hérodote. . . . Larcher ne nommera pas le boulangier de Crésus, le paléfrener de Cyrus, le chaudronnier Macistos ; il dit grand panetier, écuyer, armurier, avertissant en note que cela est plus noble.’—*Prospectus d’une Traduction Nouvelle d’Hérodote, Œuvres de P. L. Courier*, iii. 262.

For another specimen, we may instance the Abbé Velly, the most popular writer of French history in the last century. We quote from M. Thierry’s third Letter on the History of France :—

‘S’agit-il d’exprimer la distinction que la conquête des barbares établissait entre eux et les vaincus, distinction grave et triste, par

the *Anabasis*, who renders ἀνδρες στρατιωται by 'gentlemen of the army.' The character of this school is to transport present feelings and notions back into the past, and refer all ages and forms of human life to the standard of that in which the writer himself lives. Whatever cannot be translated into the language of their own time, whatever they cannot represent to themselves by some fancied modern equivalent, is nothing to them, calls up no ideas in their minds at all. They cannot imagine any thing different from their own everyday experience. They assume that words mean the same thing to a monkish chronicler as to a modern member of parliament. If they find the term *rex* applied to Clovis or Clotaire, they already talk of 'the French monarchy,' or 'the kingdom of France.' If among a tribe of savages newly escaped from the woods, they find mention of a council of leading men, or an assembled multitude giving its sanction to some matter of general concernment, their imagination jumps to a system of free institutions, and a wise contrivance of constitutional balances and checks. If, at other times, they find the chief killing and plundering without this sanction, they

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laquelle la vie d'un indigène n'était estimée, d'après le taux des amendes, qu'à la moitié du prix mis à celle de l'étranger, ce sont de pures préférences de cour, *les faveurs de nos rois* s'adressent surtout aux vainqueurs. S'agit-il de présenter le tableau de ces grandes assemblées, où tous les hommes de race Germanique se rendaient en armes, où chacun était consulté depuis le premier jusqu'au dernier; l'Abbé Velly nous parle d'une espèce de *parlement ambulatoire* et des *cours plénières*, qui étaient (après la chasse) *une partie des amusemens de nos rois*. "Nos rois," ajoute l'aimable abbé, "ne se trouvèrent bientôt plus en état de donner ces superbes fêtes. On peut dire que le règne des Carlovingiens fut celui des cours plénières. . . . Il y eut cependant toujours des fêtes à la cour; mais, avec plus de galanterie, plus de politesse, plus de goût, on n'y retrouva ni cette grandeur ni cette richesse."

"Hilderic," dit Grégoire de Tours, "regnant sur la nation des Franks et se livrant à une extrême dissolution, se prit à abuser de leurs filles; et eux, indignés de cela, le destituèrent de la royauté. Informé, en outre, qu'ils voulaient le mettre à mort, il partit et s'en alla en Thuringe." Ce récit est d'un écrivain qui vivait un siècle après l'événement. Voici maintenant les paroles de l'abbé Velly, qui se vante, dans sa préface, de puiser aux sources anciennes et de peindre exactement les mœurs, les usages, et les coutumes: "Childéric fut un prince à grandes aventures; . . . c'était l'homme le mieux fait de son royaume. Il avait de l'esprit, du courage; mais, né avec un cœur tendre, il s'abandonnait trop à l'amour: ce fut la cause de sa perte. Les seigneurs Français, aussi sensibles à l'outrage que leurs femmes l'avaient été aux charmes de ce prince, se ligèrent pour le détrôner. Contraint de céder à leur fureur, il se retira en Allémanne."

just as promptly figure to themselves an acknowledged despotism. In this manner they antedate not only modern ideas, but the essential characters of the modern mind; and imagine their ancestors to be very like their next neighbours, saving a few eccentricities, occasioned by being still Pagans or Catholics, by having no *habeas corpus* act, and no Sunday schools. If an historian of this stamp takes a side in controversy, and passes judgment upon actions or personages that have figured in history, he applies to them in the crudest form the canons of some modern party or creed. If he is a Tory, and his subject is Greece, every thing Athenian must be cried down, and Philip and Demosthenes must be washed white as snow, lest Pericles and Demosthenes should not be sufficiently black. If he be a Liberal, Cæsar and Cromwell, and all usurpers similar to them, are 'damned to everlasting fame.' Is he an unbeliever? a pedantic narrow-minded Julian becomes his pattern of a prince, and the heroes and martyrs of Christianity objects of scornful pity. If he is of the Church of England, Gregory VII. must be an ambitious impostor, because Leo X. was a self-indulgent voluptuary; John Knox nothing but a coarse-minded fanatic, because the historian does not like John Wesley. Humble as our estimate must be of this kind of writers, it would be unjust to forget, that even *their* mode of treating history is an improvement upon the unenquiring credulity which contented itself with copying or translating the ancient authorities, without ever bringing the writer's own mind in contact with the subject. It is better to conceive Demosthenes even under the image of Anacharsis Clootz, than not as a living being at all, but a figure in a puppet-show, of which Plutarch is the showman; and Mitford, so far, is a better historian than Rollin. He does give a sort of reality to historical personages: he ascribes to them passions and purposes, which, though not those of their age or position, are still human; and enables us to form a tolerably distinct, though, in general, an exceedingly false notion of their qualities and circumstances. This is a first step; and, that step made, the reader, once in motion, is not likely to stop there.

Accordingly, the second stage of historical study attempts to regard former ages not with the eye of a modern, but, as far as possible, with that of a contemporary; to realize a true and living picture of the past time, clothed in its circumstances and peculiarities. This is not an easy task: the knowledge of any amount of dry generalities, or even of the practical life and business of his own time, go a very little way to qualify a writer for it. He needs some of the characteristics of the poet. He has to 'body forth the forms of things unknown.' He must have the faculty to see, in the ends and fragments which are preserved

of some element of the past, the consistent whole to which they once belonged; to discern, in the individual fact which some monument hands down, or to which some chronicler testifies, the general, and for that very reason unrecorded, facts which it presupposes. Such gifts of imagination he must possess; and, what is rarer still, he must forbear to abuse them. He must have the conscience and self-command to assert no more than can be vouched for, or deduced by legitimate inference from what is vouched for. With the genius for producing a great historical romance, he must have the virtue to add nothing to what can be proved to be true: What wonder if so rare a combination is not often realized?

. Realized, of course, in its ideal perfection, it never is; but many now aim at it, and some approach it, according to the measure of their faculties. Of the sagacity which detects the meaning of small things, and drags to light the forgotten elements of a gone-by state of society, from scattered evidences which the writers themselves who recorded them did not understand, the world has now, in Niebuhr, an imperishable model. The reproduction of past events in the colours of life, and with all the complexity and bustle of a real scene, can hardly be carried to a higher pitch than by Mr Carlyle. But to find a school of writers, and among them several of the first rank, who systematically direct their aims towards this ideal of history, we must look to the French historians of the present day.

There is yet a third and the highest stage of historical investigation, in which the aim is not simply to compose histories, but to construct a science of history. In this view, the whole of the events which have befallen the human race, and the states through which it has passed, are regarded as a series of phenomena, produced by causes, and susceptible of explanation. All history is conceived as a progressive chain of causes and effects; or (by an apter metaphor) as a gradually unfolding web, in which every fresh part that comes to view is a prolongation of the part previously unrolled, whether we can trace the separate threads from the one into the other, or not. The facts of each generation are looked upon as one complex phenomenon, caused by those of the generation preceding, and causing, in its turn, those of the next in order. That these states must follow one another according to some law, is considered certain: how to read that law, is deemed the fundamental problem of the science of history. To find on what principles, derived from the nature of man and the system of the universe, each state of society and of the human mind produced that which came after it; and whether there can be traced any order of production sufficiently defi-

nite, to show what future states of society may be expected to emanate from the circumstances which exist at present—is the aim of historical philosophy in its third stage.

This ultimate and highest attempt, must, in the order of nature, follow, not precede, that last described; for before we can trace the filiation of states of society one from another, we must rightly understand and clearly conceive them, each apart from the rest. Accordingly, this greatest achievement is rather a possibility to be one day realized, than an enterprise in which any great progress has yet been made. But of the little yet done in that direction, by far the greater part has hitherto been done by French writers. They have made more hopeful attempts than any one else, and have more clearly pointed out the path: they are the real harbingers of the dawn of historical science.

Dr Arnold, in his *Historical Lectures*—which, (it should not be forgotten,) though the latest production of his life, were the earliest of his systematic meditations on *general* history—showed few and faint symptoms of having conceived, with any distinctness, this third step in historical study. But he had, as far as the nature of the work admitted, completely realized the second stage; and to those who have not yet attained that stage, there can scarcely be more instructive reading than his *Lectures*. The same praise must be given, in an even higher sense, to the earliest of the three great modern French historians, M. Augustin Thierry.

It was from historical romances that M. Thierry learned to recognize the worthlessness of what in those days were called histories; M. de Chateaubriand and Sir Walter Scott were his early teachers. He has himself described the effect produced upon him and others, by finding, in ‘*Ivanhoe*,’ Saxons and Normans in the reign of Richard I. Why, he asked himself, should the professed historians have left such a fact as this to be brought to light by a novelist? and what else were such men likely to have understood of the age, when so important and distinctive a feature of it had escaped them? The study of the original sources of French history, completed his conviction of the senselessness of the modern compilers. He resolved ‘to plant the ‘standard of historical reform,’—and to this undertaking all his subsequent life has been consecrated. His ‘*History of the Norman Conquest*,’ though justly chargeable with riding a favourite idea too hard, forms an era in English history. In another of his works, the ‘*Lettres sur l’Histoire de France*,’ in which profound learning is combined with that clear practical insight into the realities of life, which in France, more than in any other country except Italy, accompanies speculative emi-



nence, M. Thierry gives a *piquant* exposure of the incapacity of historians to enter into the spirit of the middle ages, and the ludicrously false impressions they communicate of human life as it was in early times. Exemplifying the right method as well as censuring the wrong, he, in the same work, extracted from the records of the middle ages some portions, not large but valuable, of the neglected facts which constitute the real history of European society. Nowhere, however, is M. Thierry's genius so pleasingly displayed, as in his most recent publication, the work of his premature old age, written under the double affliction of blindness and paralysis—the '*Récits des Temps Mérovingiens*.' This book, the first series of which is all that has yet been published, was destined to paint—what till that time he had only discussed and described—that chaos of primitive barbarism and enervated civilization, from which the present nations of Europe had their origin, and which forms the transition from ancient to modern history. He makes the age tell its own story; not drawing any thing from invention, but, like Mr Carlyle, adhering scrupulously to authentic facts. As, however, the history of the three centuries preceding Charlemagne was not worth writing throughout in the same fulness of detail as the French Revolution, he contents himself with portions of it, selecting such as, while they are illustrative of the times, are also in themselves complete stories, furnished with characters and personal interest. The experiment is completely successful. The grace and beauty of the narration makes these true histories as pleasant reading as if they were a charming collection of fictitious tales; while the practical feeling they impart of the form of human life from which they are drawn—the familiar understanding they communicate of '*la vie barbare*,'—is unexampled even in fiction, and unthought of heretofore in any writing professedly historical. The narratives are preceded by an improved *résumé* of the author's previous labours in the theoretical department of his subject, under the title of a '*Dissertation on the Progress of Historical Studies in France*.'

M. Guizot has a mind of a different cast from M. Thierry; the one is, especially, a man of speculation and science, as the other is, more emphatically, in the high European sense of the term, an artist; though this is not to be understood of either in an exclusive sense, each possessing a fair share of the qualities characteristic of the other. Of all Continental historians of whom we are aware, M. Guizot is the one best adapted to this country, and a familiarity with whose writings would do most to train up and ripen among us the growing spirit of historical speculation.

M. Guizot's only narrative work is the unfinished history, already referred to, of what is called in France the English Revolution. His principal productions are the *Essais sur l'Histoire de France*, published in 1822, and the Lectures, which the whole literary public of Paris thronged to hear, from 1828 to 1830, and to which, as well as to his English history, the political events of the last of those years put an abrupt termination. The immense popularity of these writings in their own country—a country not more patient of the 'genre ennuyeux' than its neighbours—is a sufficient guarantee that their wearing the form of dissertation, and not of narrative, is, in this instance, no detriment to their attractiveness. Even the light reader will find in them no resemblance to the chapters on 'manners and customs,' which, with pardonable impatience, he is accustomed to skip, when turning over any of the historians of the old school. For in them, we find only that dullest and most useless of all things, mere facts without ideas: M. Guizot creates within those dry bones a living soul.

M. Guizot does not, as in the main must be said of M. Thierry, remain in what we have called the second region of historical enquiry: he makes frequent and long incursions into the third. He not only enquires what our ancestors were, but what made them so; what gave rise to the peculiar state of society of the middle ages, and by what causes this state was progressively transformed into what we see around us. His success in this respect could not, in the almost nascent state of the science of history, be perfect; but it is as great as was perhaps compatible with the limits of his design. For, (it has been well remarked,) in the study of history, we must proceed from the *ensemble* to the details, and not conversely. We cannot explain the facts of any age or nation, unless we have first traced out some connected view of the main outline of history. The great universal results must be first accounted for, not only because they are the most important, but because they depend upon the simplest laws. Taking place on so large a scale as to neutralize the operation of local and partial agents, it is in them alone that we see in undisguised action the inherent tendencies of the human race. Those great results, therefore, may admit of a complete theory; while it would be impossible to give a full analysis of the innumerable causes which influenced the local or temporary development of some section of mankind; and even a distant approximation to it supposes a previous understanding of the general laws, to which these local causes stand in the relation of modifying circumstances.

But before astronomy had its Newton, there was a place, and

an honourable one, for not only the observer Tycho, but the theorizer Kepler. M. Guizot is the Kepler, and something more, of his particular subject. He has a real talent for the explanation and generalization of historical facts. He unfolds at least the proximate causes of social phenomena, with rare discernment, and much knowledge of human nature. We recognise, moreover, in all his theories, not only a solidity of acquirements, but a sobriety and impartiality, which neither his countrymen, nor speculative thinkers in general, have often manifested in so high a degree. He does not exaggerate the influence of some one cause or agency, sacrificing all others to it. He neither writes as if human affairs were absolutely moulded by the wisdom and virtue, or the vices and follies of rulers; nor as if the general circumstances of society did all, and accident or eminent individuals could do nothing. He neither attributes every thing to political institutions, nor every thing to the ideas and convictions in men's minds; but shows how they both co-operate, and react upon one another. He sees in European civilization the complex product of many conflicting influences, Germanic, Roman, and Christian; and of the peculiar position in which these different forces were brought to act upon one another. He ascribes to each of them its share of influence. Whatever may be added to his speculations in a more advanced state of historical science, little that he has done, will, we think, require to be undone; his conclusions are seldom likely to be found in contradiction with the deeper or more extensive results that may, perhaps, hereafter be obtained.

It speaks little for the intellectual tastes and the liberal curiosity of our countrymen, that they remain ignorant or neglectful of such writings. The 'Essays' we have scarcely ever met with an Englishman who had read. Of the 'Lectures,' one volume has been twice translated, and has had some readers, especially when M. Guizot's arrival in England, as the representative of his country, obtruded (as Dr Chalmers would say) a knowledge of his existence and character upon London society. But the other four volumes are untranslated and unread, although they are the work itself, to which the first volume is, in truth, only the introduction. When the Villèle Ministry was overthrown, and the interdict removed by which the Government of the Restoration had chained up all independent speculation, M. Guizot reopened his lecture-room after a suspension of near ten years. Half the academic season having then expired, he was compelled, not only to restrict his view of modern history to the merest outline, but to leave out half the subject altogether; treating only of the progress of Society, and reserving for the more extended labours of

subsequent years, the development of the individual human being. Yet critics have been found in England, who, in entire ignorance that the volume before them was a mere preface, visited upon the author, as shortcomings in his own views, the *lacunæ* unavoidably left in his first year's lectures, and amply filled up in those of the succeeding seasons;—charging upon him as a grave philosophical error, that he saw in history only institutions and social relations, and altogether overlooked human beings.

What has obtained for the introductory volume the share of attention with which it (and not the others) has been treated by the English public, is perhaps that it bears, as its second title, 'History of Civilization in Europe;' while the other volumes, after the words, 'Cours d'Histoire Moderne,' bear the designation of 'Histoire de la Civilization en France,' and as such may have been deemed not specially interesting to England. But though this may avail in explanation, it is inadmissible as an excuse. A person must need instruction in history very much, who does not know that the history of civilization in France *is* that of civilization in Europe. The main course of the stream of civilization is identical in all the western nations; their origin was essentially similar—they went through the same phases—and society in all of them, at least until after the Reformation, consisted fundamentally of the same elements. Any one country, therefore, may, in some measure, stand for all the rest. But France is the best type, as representing best the average circumstances of Europe. There is no country in which the general tendencies of modern society have been so little interfered with by secondary and modifying agencies. In England, for example, much is to be ascribed to the peculiarity of a double conquest. While elsewhere *one* race of barbarians overran an extensive region, and settled down amidst a subject population greatly more numerous, as well as much more civilized, than themselves; the first invaders of England, instead of enslaving, exterminated or expelled the former inhabitants; and after growing up into a nation, were in their turn subdued by a race almost exactly on a level with them in civilization. The Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, and a great part of Germany, had never been conquered at all; and, in the latter, much depended upon the elective character of the head of the empire, which prevented the consolidation of a powerful central government. In Italy, the early predominance of towns and town life; in Spain, the Moorish occupation, and its consequences, coexisted as modifying causes with the general circumstances common to all. But in France, no disturbing forces, of any thing like equal potency, can

be traced; and the universal tendencies, having prevailed more completely, are more obviously discernible.

To any European, therefore, the history of France is not a foreign subject, but a part of his national history. Nor is there any thing partial or local in M. Guizot's treatment of it. He draws his details and exemplifications from France; but his principles are universal. The social conditions and changes which he delineates, were not French, but European. The intellectual progress which he retraces, was the progress of the European mind.\*

A similar remark applies to the '*History of France*' by M. Michelet, the third great French historian of the present era—a work which, even in its unfinished state, is the most important that he has produced, and of which it is now time that we should begin to give an account.

M. Michelet has, among the writers of European history, a position peculiarly his own.

Were we to say that M. Michelet is altogether as safe a writer as M. Thierry or M. Guizot—that his interpretations of history may be accepted as actual history—that those who dislike to think or explore for themselves, may sleep peacefully in the faith that M. Michelet has thought and explored for them—we should give him a different kind of praise from that which we consider his due. M. Michelet's are not books to save a reader the trouble of thinking, but to make him boil over with thought. Their effect on the mind is not acquiescence, but stir and ferment.

M. Michelet has opened a new vein in the history of the middle ages. A pupil of M. Guizot, or at least an admiring auditor, who has learned from him most of what he had to teach, M. Michelet, for this very reason, has not followed in his wake, but consulted the bent of his own faculties, which prompted him to undertake precisely what M. Guizot had left undone. Of him it would be very unlikely to be said, even falsely, that he thought only of society. Without overlooking society, man is his especial subject. M. Guizot has neglected neither, but has treated them both conformably to the character of his own mind. He is himself two things—a statesman and a speculative thinker; and in his Lectures, when he leaves the province of the statesman, it is for that of the metaphysician. His history of the human mind is principally the history of speculation. It is otherwise with M. Michelet. His peculiar element is that of the poet, as his countrymen would say—of the religious man, as would be said in a

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\* We hope to be able, ere long, to give a fuller view of the principal work of this eminent writer.

religious age—in reality, of both. Not the intellectual life of intellectual men, not the social life of the people, but their internal life; their thoughts and feelings in relation to themselves and their destination; the habitual temper of their minds—not overlooking, of course, their external circumstances. He concerns himself more with masses than with literary individuals, except as specimens, on a larger scale, of what was in the general heart of their age. His chief interest is for the collective mind, the everyday plebeian mind of humanity—its enthusiasms, its collapses, its strivings, its attainments, and failures. He makes us feel with its sufferings, rejoice in its hopes; he makes us identify ourselves with the varying fortunes and feelings of human nature, as if mankind or Christendom were one being, the single and indivisible hero of a tale.

M. Michelet had afforded an earnest of these qualities in his former writings. He has written a history of the Roman Republic, in which he availed himself largely, as all writers on Roman history now do, of the new views opened by the profound sagacity of Niebuhr. One thing, however, he has not drawn from Niebuhr; for Niebuhr had it not to bestow. We have no right to require that an author, who has done in his department great things which no one before him had done, or could do, should have done all other good things likewise. But without meaning disparagement to Niebuhr, it has always struck us as remarkable, that a mind so fitted to throw light upon the dark places in the Roman manner of existence, should have exhausted its efforts in clearing up and rendering intelligible the merely civic life of the Roman people. By the aid of Niebuhr, we now know, better than we had ever reckoned upon knowing, what the Roman republic was. But what the Romans themselves were, we scarcely know better than we did before. It is true that citizenship, its ideas, feelings, and active duties, filled a larger space in ancient, than in any form of modern life; but they did not constitute the whole. A Roman citizen had a religion and gods, had a religious morality, had domestic relations; there were women in Rome as well as men; there were children, who were brought up and educated in a certain manner; there were, even in the earliest period of the Roman commonwealth, slaves. Of all this, one perceives hardly any thing in Niebuhr's voluminous work. The central idea of the Roman religion and polity, the family, scarcely shows itself, except in connexion with the classification of the citizens; nor are we made to perceive in what the beliefs and modes of conduct of the Romans, respecting things in general, agreed, and in what disagreed, with those of the rest of the ancient world. Yet the mystery of the Romans and of their

fortunes must lie there. Now, of many of these things, one does learn something from the much smaller work of M. Michelet. In imaging to ourselves the relation in which a Roman stood, not to his fellow-citizens as such, but to the universe, we gain some help from Michelet—next to none from Niebuhr. The work before us has, in a still greater degree, a similar merit. Without neglecting the outward condition of mankind, but, on the contrary, throwing much new light upon it, he tells us mainly of their inward mental workings. Others have taught us as much of how mankind acted at each period, but no one makes us so well comprehend how they felt. He is the subjective historian, of the middle ages.

For his book, at least in the earlier volumes, is a history of the middle ages, quite as much as of France; and he has aimed at giving us, not the dry husk, but the spirit of those ages. This had never been done before in the same degree, not even by his eminent precursor, Thierry, except for the period of the Germanic invasions. The great value of the book is, that it does, to some extent, make us understand what was really passing in the collective mind of each generation. For, in assuming distinctness, the life of the past assumes also variety under M. Michelet's hands. With him, each period has a physiognomy and a character of its own. It is in reading him that we are made to feel distinctly, how many successive conditions of humanity, and states of the human mind, are habitually confounded under the appellation of the Middle Ages. To common perception, those times are like a distant range of mountains, all melted together into one cloudlike barrier. To M. Michelet, they are like the same range on a nearer approach, resolved into its separate mountain masses, with sloping sides overlapping one another, and gorges opening between them.

The spirit of an age is a part of its history which cannot be extracted literally from ancient records, but must be distilled from those arid materials by the chemistry of the writer's own mind; and whoever attempts this, will expose himself to the imputation of substituting imaginations for facts, writing history by divination, &c. These accusations have been often brought against M. Michelet, and we will not take upon ourselves to say that they are never just; we think he is not seldom the dupe of his own ingenuity. But it is a mistake to suppose that a man of genius will be oftener wrong, in his views of history, than a dull unimaginative prosaist. Not only are the very errors of the one more instructive than the commonplaces of the other, but he commits fewer of them. It by no means follows, that he who cannot see so far as another, must, therefore, see

more safely. To be incapable of discerning what is, gives no exemption from believing what is not; and there is no perversion of history by persons who think, equal to those daily committed by writers who never rise to the height of an original idea.

It is true, a person of lively apprehension and fertile invention, relying upon his sagacity, may neglect the careful study of original documents. But M. Michelet is a man of deep erudition and extensive research. He has a high reputation among the French learned for his industry; while his official position, which connects him with the archives of the kingdom, has given him access to a rich source of unexplored authorities, of which he has made abundant use in his later volumes, and which promise to be of still greater importance in those yet to come. Even in its mere facts, therefore, this history is considerably in advance of all previously written. That his accuracy is not vulnerable in any material point, may be believed on the authority of the sober and right-minded Thierry, who, in the preface to the *Récits*, in a passage where, though Michelet is not named, he is evidently pointed at, blames his method as a dangerous one, but acquits M. Michelet himself as having been saved by 'conscientious studies' from the errors into which his example is likely to betray young writers. The carefulness of his investigations has been impugned on minor points. An English Review has made a violent attack upon his account of Boniface VIII.; and, from his references, (which are always copious,) it does not appear that he had consulted the Italian authorities on which the reviewer relies. But it is hard to try an historian by the correctness of his details in incidents only collaterally connected with his subject. We ourselves perceive that he sometimes trusts to memory, and is inaccurate in trifles; but the true question is—Has he falsified the essential character of any of the greater events of the time about which he writes? If he has not, but, on the contrary, has placed many of these events in a truer light, and rendered their character more intelligible, than any former historian, to rectify his small mistakes will be a very fitting employment for those who have the necessary information, and nothing more important to do.

The History, though a real narrative, not a dissertation, is, in all its earlier parts, a greatly abridged one. The writer dwells only on the great facts which paint their period, or on things which it appears necessary to present in a new light. As, in his progress, however, he came into contact with his new materials, his design has extended; and the fourth and fifth volumes, embracing the confused period of the wars of Edward III. and Henry V., contain, though in a most condensed style, a tolerably minute



recital of events. It is impossible for us to make any approach to an abstract of the contents of so large a work. We must be satisfied with touching cursorily upon some of the passages of history, on which M. Michelet's views are the most original, or otherwise most deserving of notice.

In the first volume, he is on ground which had already been broken and well turned over by M. Thierry. But some one was still wanting who should write the history of the time, in a connected narrative, from M. Thierry's point of view. M. Michelet has done this, and more. He has not only understood, like his predecessor, the character of the age of transition, in which the various races, conquered and conquering, were mixed on French soil without being blended; but he has endeavoured to assign to the several elements of that confused mixture, the share of influence which belongs to them over the subsequent destinies of his country.

It was natural that a subjective historian, one who looks, above all, to the internal moving forces of human affairs, should attach great historical importance to the consideration of Races. This subject, on British soil, has usually fallen into hands little competent to treat it soberly, or on true principles of induction; but of the great influence of Race in the production of National Character, no reasonable enquirer can now doubt. As far as history, and social circumstances generally, are concerned, how little resemblance can be traced between the French and the Irish—in national character, how much! The same ready excitability; the same impetuosity when excited, yet the same readiness under excitement to submit to the severest discipline—a quality which at first might seem to contradict impetuosity, but which arises from that very vehemence of character with which it appears to conflict, and is equally conspicuous in revolutions of Three Days, temperance movements, and meetings on the hill of Tara. The same sociability and demonstrativeness—the same natural refinement of manners, down to the lowest rank—in both, the characteristic weakness an inordinate vanity, their more serious moral deficiency the absence of a sensitive regard for truth. Their ready susceptibility to influences, while it makes them less steady in right, makes them also less pertinacious in wrong, and renders them, under favourable circumstances of culture, reclaimable and improvable (especially through their more generous feelings) in a degree to which the more obstinate races are strangers. To what, except their Gaelic blood, can we ascribe all this similarity between populations, the whole course of whose national history has been so different? We say Gaelic, not

Celtic, because the Kymri of Wales and Brittany, though also called Celts, and notwithstanding a close affinity in language, have evinced throughout history, in many respects, an opposite type of character; more like the Spanish Iberians than either the French or Irish—individual instead of gregarious, tough and obstinate instead of impressible—instead of the most disciplinable, one of the most intractable Races among mankind.

Historians who preceded M. Michelet had seen chiefly the Frankish, or the Roman element, in the formation of modern France. M. Michelet calls attention to the Gaelic element. 'The foundation of the French people,' he says,\* 'is the youthful, soft, and mobile race of the Gaels, *bruyante*, sensual, and *légère*—prompt to learn, prompt to despise, greedy of new things.' To the ready impressibility of this race, and the easy reception it gave to foreign influences, he attributes the progress made by France. 'Such children require severe preceptors. They will meet with such, both from the south and from the north. Their mobility will be fixed, their softness hardened and strengthened. Reason must be added to instinct, reflection to impulse.'

It is certain that no people, in a semi-barbarous state, ever received a foreign civilization more rapidly than the French Celts. In a century after Julius Cæsar, not only the south, the *Gallia Narbonensis*, but the whole east of Gaul, from Treves and Cologne southwards, were already almost as Roman as Italy itself. The Roman institutions and ideas took a deeper root in Gaul than in any other province of the Roman empire, and remained long predominant, wherever no great change was effected in the population by the ravages of the invaders. But, along with this capacity of improvement, M. Michelet does not find in the Gauls that voluntary loyalty of man to man, that free adherence, founded on confiding attachment, which was characteristic of the Germanic tribes, and of which, in his view, the feudal relation was the natural result. It is to these qualities, to personal devotedness and faith in one another, that he ascribes the universal success of the Germanic tribes in overpowering the Celtic. He finds already in the latter the root of that passion for equality which distinguishes modern France; and which, when unbalanced by a strong principle of sympathetic union, has always, he says, prevented the pure Celts from becoming a nation. Every where among the Celts, he finds equal division of inheritances, while in the Germanic races primogeniture easily esta-

blished itself—an institution which, in a rude state of society, he justly interprets as equivalent to the permanence of the household, the non-separation of families,

We think that M. Michelet has here carried the influence of Race too far, and that the difference is better explained by diversity of position, than by diversity of character in the Races. The conquerors, a small body scattered over a large territory, could not sever their interests, could not relax the bonds which held them together. They were for many generations encamped in the country, rather than settled in it; they were a military band, requiring a military discipline; and the separate members could not afford to detach themselves from each other, or from their chief. Similar circumstances would have produced similar results among the Gauls themselves. They were by no means without something analogous to the German *comitatus*, (as the voluntary bond of adherence, of the most sacred kind, between followers and a leader of their choice, is called by the Roman historians.) The *devoti* of the Gauls and Aquitanians, mentioned by M. Michelet himself, on the authority of Cæsar\* and Athenæus, were evidently not clansmen. Some such relation may be traced in many other warlike tribes. We find it even among the most obstinately personal of all the Races of antiquity, the Iberians of Spain;—witness the Roman Sertorius, and his Spanish body-guard, who slew themselves, to the last man, before his funeral pile. ‘Ce principe d’attachement à un chef, ce dévouement personnel, cette religion de l’homme envers l’homme,’† is thus by no means peculiar to the Teutonic races. And our author’s favourite idea of the ‘profonde impersonnalité’‡ inherent in the Germanic genius, though we are far from saying that there is no foundation for it, surely requires some limitation. It will hardly, for example, be held true of the English; yet the English are a Germanic people. They, indeed, have rather (or at least had) the characteristic which M. Michelet predicates of the Celts, (thinking, apparently, rather of the Kymri than of the Gaels,) ‘le génie de la personnalité libre;’ a tendency to revolt against compulsion, to hold fast to their

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\* Aducantanus, qui summam Imperii tenebat, cum DC devotis, quos illi soldurios appellant: quorum hæc est conditio, uti omnibus in vita commodis una cum his fruantur quorum se amicitiae dederint: si quid iis per vim accidat, aut eundem casum una ferant, aut sibi mortem consciscant: neque adhuc hominum memoria repertus est quisquam, qui, eo interfecto cujus se amicitiae devovisset, mori recusaret.—*De Bello Gallico*, iii. 22.x

† Michelet, vol. i. p. 168.

‡ Ib. p. 171.

own, and assert the claims of individuality against those of society and authority. But though many of M. Michelet's speculations on the characteristics of Races appear to us contestable, they are always suggestive of thought. The next thing to having a question solved, is to have it well raised. M. Michelet's are views by which a thinker, even if he rejects them, seldom fails to profit.

From the Races our author passes to the provinces, which, by their successive aggregation, composed the French monarchy. France is, in the main, peopled by a mixed race; but it contains several populations of pure race at its remoter extremities. It includes several distinct languages, and, above all, a great variety of climate, soil, and situation. Next to hereditary organization, geographical peculiarities have a more powerful influence than any other natural agency in the formation of national character. Any one, capable of such speculations, will read with strong interest the review of the various provinces of France, which occupies the first hundred and thirty pages of our author's second volume. In this brilliant sketch, he surveys the local circumstances, and national peculiarities of each province, and compares them with the type of character which belongs to its inhabitants; as shown in the history of each province, in the eminent individuals who have sprung from it, and in the results of intelligent personal observation even in the present day. We say *even*, because M. Michelet is not unaware of the tendency of provincial and local peculiarities to disappear. A strenuous assertor of the power of mind over matter, of will over spontaneous propensities, culture over nature, he holds that local characteristics lose their importance as history advances. In a rude age, the 'fatalities' of race and geographical position are absolute. In the progress of society, human forethought and purpose, acting by means of uniform institutions and modes of culture, tend more and more to efface the pristine differences. And he attributes, in no small degree, the greatness of France to the absence of any marked local peculiarities in the predominant part of her population. Paris, and an extensive region all round—from the borders of Brittany to those of Champagne, from the northern extremity of Picardy to the mountains of Auvergne—is distinguished by no marked natural features; and its inhabitants, a more mixed population than any other in France, have no distinct, well-defined individuality of character. This very deficiency, or what might seem so, makes them the ready recipients of ideas and modes of action from all sides, and qualifies them to bind together heterogeneous populations in harmonious union, by receiving the influence and assuming the character of each, as far

as may be, without exclusion of the rest. In those different populations (on the other hand,) M. Michelet finds an abundant variety of provincial characteristics, of all shades and degrees, up to those obstinate individualities which cling with the tenacity of iron to their own usages, and yield only after a long and dogged resistance to the general movement of humanity. In these portraits of the provinces there is much to admire, and occasionally something to startle. The form and vesture are more poetical than philosophical; the sketch of Brittany wants only verse to be a fine poem. But, though fancifully expressed, there is, in this survey of France, much more which seems, than which is, fanciful. There is, as we believe, for much, if not most of it, a foundation of sober reason; and out of its poetry we could extract an excellent treatise in unexceptionable prose, did not our limits admonish us to hurry to those parts of the work which are of more universal interest.

From this place the book becomes a picture of the middle ages, in a series of *Tableaux*. The facts are not delivered in the dry form of chronological annals, but are grouped round a certain number of central figures or leading events, selected so that each half century has at least one *Tableau* belonging to it. The groups, we need scarcely add, represent the mind of the age, not its mere outward physiognomy and costume. The successive titles of the chapters will form an appropriate catalogue to this new kind of historical picture gallery:—

‘ Chap. I. The year 1000—The French King and the French Pope, Robert and Gerbert—Feudal France.—II. Eleventh Century—Gregory VII.—Alliance between the Normans and the Church—Conquests of Naples and England.—III. The Crusade.—IV. Consequences of the Crusade—The Communes—Abailard—First half of the Twelfth Century.—V. The King of France and the King of England, Louis-le-Jeune and Henry Plantagenet—Second Crusade—Humiliation of Louis—Thomas Becket—Humiliation of Henry.—VI. The year 1100—Innocent III.—The Pope, by the arms of the Northern French, prevails over the King of England and the Emperor of Germany, the Greek Empire and the Albigeois—Greatness of the King of France.—VII. The last Chapter continued—Ruin of John—Defeat of the Emperor—War of the Albigeois.—VIII. First half of the Thirteenth Century—Mysticism—Louis IX.—Sanctity of the King of France.—IX. Struggle between the Mendicant Orders and the University—St Thomas—Doubts of St Louis—The Passion as a principle of Art in the Middle Ages.’

The next chapter, being the first of the third volume, is headed, ‘ The Sicilian Vespers ;’ the second, ‘ Philippe-le-Bel and Boniface VIII.’

This arrangement of topics promises much, and the promise is

well redeemed. Every one of the chapters we have cited is full of interesting *aperçus*, and fruitful in suggestions of thought.

Forced to make a selection, we shall choose among the features of the middle age, as here presented, one or two of the most interesting, and the most imperfectly understood. Of the individual figures in our author's canvass, none is more impressive than Hildebrand. Of the moral and social phenomena which he depicts, the greatest is the Papacy.

Respecting the Papal Church, and that, its greatest Pontiff, the views of our author are such as, from the greater number of English readers, can scarcely hope for ready acceptance. They are far removed from those either of our Protestant or of our sceptical historians. They are so unlike Hume, that they stand a chance of being confounded with Lingard. Such, however, as they are, we think them well worth knowing and considering. They are, in substance, the opinions of almost every historical enquirer in France, who has any pretensions to thought or research, be he Catholic, Protestant, or infidel. The time is past when any French thinker, worthy the name, looked upon the Catholic Hierarchy as having *always* been the base and tyrannical thing which, to a great extent, it ultimately became. No one now confounds what the Church was, when its prelates and clergy universally believed what they taught, with what it was when they had ceased to believe. No one argues—from the conduct which they even conscientiously pursued when the human intellect, having got beyond the Church, became its most formidable foe—that it must therefore have been equally an enemy to improvement when it was at the head, instead of the rear of civilization; when all that was instructed in Europe was comprised within its pale, and it was the authorized champion of intelligence and self-control against military and predatory violence. Even the fraud and craft by which it often aided itself in its struggles with brute force; even the ambition and selfishness by which, in its very best days, its nobler aims, like those of all other classes or bodies, were continually tarnished—do not disguise from impartial thinkers on the Continent, the fact that it was the great improver and civilizer of Europe.

That the clergy were the preservers of all letters and all culture, of the writings and even the traditions of literary antiquity, is too evident to have been ever disputed. But for them there would have been a complete break, in Western Europe, between the ancient and modern world. Books would have disappeared, and even Christianity, if it survived at all, would have existed merely as another form of the old barbarous superstitions. Some, too, are aware of the services rendered even to

material civilization by the Monastic associations of Italy and France, after the great reform by St Benedict. Unlike the useless communities of contemplative ascetics in the East, they were diligent in tilling the earth and fabricating useful products; they knew and taught that temporal work may also be a spiritual exercise; and, protected by their sacred character from depredation, they set the first example to Europe of industry conducted on a large scale by free labour. But these things are commonly regarded as good which came out of evil;—incidental benefits, arising casually, or providentially, from an institution radically vicious. It would do many English thinkers much good to acquaint themselves with the grounds on which the best continental minds, without disguising one particle of the evil which existed, openly or latently, in the Romish Church, are on the whole convinced that it was not only a beneficent institution, but the only means capable of being now assigned, by which Europe could have been reclaimed from barbarism.

It is, no doubt, the characteristic evil incident to a corporation of priests, that the exaltation of their order becomes, in and for itself, a primary object, to which the ends of the institution are often sacrificed. That exaltation is the strongest interest of all its members, the bad equally with the good; for it is the means by which both hope to attain their ends. The maintenance of their influence is to them what the maintenance of its revenue is to a temporal government—the condition of its existence. The Romish Church, being more powerfully organized and more thoroughly disciplined than any other, pursued this end with inflexible energy and perseverance, and often by the most culpable means. False miracles, forged donations, religious persecutions—these things we have no desire to extenuate; but he must be wretchedly ignorant of human nature, who believes that any great or durable edifice of moral power was ever raised chiefly by such means. It is in the decline, in the decrepitude of religious systems, that force and artifice come into the first rank as expedients for maintaining a little longer what is left of their dominion. Deep sincerity, entire absorption of themselves in their task, were assuredly as indispensable conditions, in the more eminent of the Popes, of the success which they met with, as in the heroes of the Reformation. In such men the power of the hierarchy might well become a passion; but the extension of that power was a legitimate object, for the sake of the great things which they had to accomplish by it.

Who, in the middle ages, were worthier of power than the clergy? Did they not need all, and more than all the influence they could acquire, when they could not be kings or emperors,

and when kings and emperors were among those whose passion and arrogance they had to admonish and govern? The great Ambrose, refusing absolution to Theodosius until he performed penance for a massacre, was a type of what these men had to do. In an age of violence and *brigandage*, who but the Church could insist on justice, and forbearance, and reconciliation? In an age when the weak were prostrate at the feet of the strong, who was there but the Church to plead to the strong for the weak? They were the depositaries of the only moral power to which the great were amenable; they alone had a right to remind kings and potentates of responsibility; to speak to them of humility, charity, and peace. Even in the times of the first ferocious invaders, the '*Récits*' of M. Thierry (though the least favourable of the modern French historians to the Romish clergy) show, at what peril to themselves, the prelates of the Church continually stepped between the oppressor and his victim. Almost all the great social improvements which took place, were accomplished under their influence. They at all times took part with the kings against the feudal anarchy. The enfranchisement of the mass of the people from personal servitude, they not only favoured, but inculcated as a Christian duty. They were the authors of the 'Truce of God,' that well-known attempt to mitigate the prevailing brutalities, by a forced suspension of acts of vengeance and private war during four days and five nights of every week. They could not succeed in enforcing this periodical armistice, which was too much in advance of the time. Their worst offence was, that they connived at acts of unjust acquisition by friends and supporters of the Pope; and encouraged unprovoked aggressions, by orthodox princes, against less obedient sons of the Church. We may add, that they were seldom favourable to civil liberty; which, indeed, in the rude form in which its first germs grew up, not as an institution, but as a principle of resistance to institutions, found little favour with speculative men in the middle ages, to whom, by a not unnatural prejudice at such a time, peace and obedience seemed the one condition of good. But, in another sense, the Church was eminently a democratic institution. To a temporal society in which all rank depended on birth, it opposed a spiritual society in which the source of rank was personal qualities; in which the distinctions of people and aristocracy, freeman and bondman, disappeared—which recruited itself from all ranks—in which a serf might rise to be a cardinal, or even a pope; while to rise at all to any eminence, almost always required talents, and at least a reputation for virtue. In one of the earliest combinations made by the feudal nobles against the clergy, the



league of the French Seigneurs in 1246, it stands in the foremost rank of accusation against them, that they were the 'sons of serfs.'\*

Now we say that the priesthood never could have stood their ground, in such an age, against kings and their powerful vassals, as an independent moral authority, entitled to advise, to reprimand, and, if need were, to denounce, if they had not been bound together into an European body, under a government of their own. They must otherwise have groveled from the first in that slavish subservience into which they sank at last. No local, no merely national organization, would have sufficed. The state has too strong a hold upon an exclusively national corporation. Nothing but an authority recognised by many nations, and not essentially dependent upon any one, could, in that age, have been adequate to the post. It required a Pope to speak with authority to Kings and Emperors. Had an individual priest even had the courage to tell them that they had violated the law of God, his voice, not being the voice of the Church, would not have been heeded. That the Pope, when he pretended to depose Kings, or made war upon them with temporal arms, went beyond his province, needs hardly, in the present day, be insisted upon. But when he claimed the right of censuring and denouncing them, with whatever degree of solemnity, in the name of the moral law which all recognised, he assumed a function necessary at all times, and which, in those days, no one except the Church could assume, or was in any degree qualified to exercise. Time must show if the organ we now have for the performance of this office—if the censure by newspapers and public meetings, which has succeeded to censure by the Church—will be found in the end less liable to perversion and abuse than that was. However this may be, the latter form was the only one possible in those days.

Were the Popes, then, so entirely in the wrong, as historians have deemed them, in their disputes with the Emperors, and with the Kings of England and France? Doubtless they, no more than their antagonists, knew where to stop short. Doubtless, in the ardour of the conflict, they laid claim to powers not compatible with a purely spiritual authority, and occasionally put forth pretensions, which, if completely successful, would have plunged Europe into the torpor of an Egyptian hierarchy. But there never was any danger lest they should succeed too far. The Church was always the weaker party, and occupied essentially a defensive position.

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\* Michelet, vol. ii. p. 615, note.

We cannot feel any doubt that Gregory VII., whatever errors he may have committed, was right in the great objects which he proposed to himself. His life is memorable by two things—his contest with the State, and the reform in the Church itself, which preceded it. The Church was rapidly becoming secularized. He checked the evil by enforcing the celibacy of the clergy. Protestant writers have looked upon this ordinance of the Catholic Church, as the joint product of pontifical ambition and popular fanaticism. We would not deny that fanaticism, or rather religious asceticism, had much to do with the popular feeling on the subject, and was perhaps the only lever by which the work could possibly have been accomplished. But we believe that in that age, without the institution of celibacy, the efficiency of the Church as an instrument of human culture was gone. In the early vigorous youth of the feudal system, when every thing tended to become hereditary, when every temporal function had already become so, the clerical office was rapidly becoming hereditary too. The clergy were becoming a Braminical Caste, or worse—a mere appendage of the Caste of soldiery. Already the prelacies and abbasies were filled by the younger brothers of the feudal nobility, who, like their elder brethren, spent the greater part of their time in hunting and war. These had begun to transmit their benefices to their sons, and give them in marriage with their daughters. The smaller preferments would have become the prey of their smaller retainers. Against this evil, what other remedy than that which Gregory adopted did the age afford? Could it remain unremedied?

And what, when impartially considered, is the protracted dispute about investitures, except a prolongation of the same struggle? For what end did the princes of the middle ages desire the appointment of prelates? To make their profit of the revenues by keeping the sees vacant; to purchase tools, and reward adherents; at best, to keep the office in a state of complete subservience. It was no immoderate pretension in the spiritual authority to claim the free choice of its own instruments. The emperors had previously asserted a right to nominate the Pope himself, and had exercised that right in many instances. Had they succeeded, the spiritual power would have become that mere instrument of despotism which it became at Constantinople—which it is in Russia—which the Popes of Avignon became in the hands of the French kings. And even had the Pope maintained his own personal independence, the nomination of the national clergy by their respective monarchs, with no effectual concurrence of his, would have made the national clergy take part with the kings against their own order;—as a

large section of them always did, and as the whole clergy of France and England ended by doing, because in those countries the kings, in the main, succeeded in keeping possession of the appointment to benefices.

Even for what seems in the abstract a still more objectionable pretension, the claim to the exemption of ecclesiastics from secular jurisdiction, which has scandalized so grievously most of our English historians, there is much more to be said than those historians were aware of. What was it, after all, but the assertion, in behalf of the clergy, of the received English principle of being tried by their peers? The secular tribunals were the courts of a rival power, often in actual conflict with the clergy, always jealous of them, always ready to make use of its jurisdiction as a means of wreaking its vengeance, or serving its ambition; and were stained, besides, with the grossest corruption and tyranny. 'These rights,' says M. Michelet,\* 'gave rise, no doubt, to great abuses; many crimes were committed by priests, and committed with impunity; but when one reflects on the frightful barbarity, the execrable fiscality of the lay tribunals in the twelfth century, one is forced to admit that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was then an anchor of safety. It spared, perhaps, the guilty; but how often it saved the innocent! The Church was almost the only road by which the despised races were able to recover any ascendancy. We see this by the example of the two Saxons, Breakspear (Adrian IV.) and Becket. The liberties of the Church in that age were those of mankind.'

On the other hand, Henry II., by the Constitutions of Clarendon, assumed to himself and his great justiciary a veto on the purely spiritual act of excommunication—the last resort of the Church—the ultimate sanction on which she depended for her moral jurisdiction. No one of the king's tenants was to be excommunicated without his consent. On which side was here the usurpation? And, in this pretension, Henry was supported by the great majority of his own bishops; so little cause was there really to dread any undue preponderance of Popes over Kings.

The Papacy was in the end defeated, even in its reasonable claims. It had to give up, in the main, all the contested points. As the monarchies of Europe were consolidated, and the Kings grew more powerful, the Church became more dependent. The last Pope who dared to defy a bad king, was made a prisoner in his palace, insulted, and struck by the emissary of the tyrant. That Pope died broken-hearted; his immediate successor died

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\* Vol. ii. p. 343.

poisoned. The next was Clement V., in whom, for the first time, the Church sank into the abject tool of secular tyranny. With him commenced that new era of the Papacy, which made it the horror and disgust of the then rapidly improving European mind, until the Reformation and its consequences closed the period which we commonly call the middle age.

We know it may be said, that, long before this time, venality was a current and merited accusation against the Papal court. We often find Rome denounced, by the indignation of contemporaries, as a market in which every thing might be bought. All periods of supposed purity in the administration of human affairs are the dreams of a golden age. We well know that there was only occasionally a Pope who acted consistently on any high ideal of the pontifical character; that many were sordid and vicious, and those who were not, had often sordid and vicious persons around them. Who can estimate the extent to which the power of the Church, for realizing the noble aims of its more illustrious ornaments, was crippled and made infirm by these shortcomings? But, to the time of Innocent III., and even of Boniface VIII., we are unable to doubt that it was on the whole a source of good, and of such good as could not have been provided, for that age, by any other means with which we can conceive such an age to be compatible.

Among the Epochs in the progressive movement of middle-age history, which M. Michelet has been the first to bring clearly and vividly before us, there is none more interesting than the great awakening of the human mind which immediately followed the period of the First Crusade. Others before him had pointed out the influence of the Crusade in generating the feeling of a common Christendom; in counteracting the localizing influence of the feudal institutions, and raising up a kind of republic of chivalry and Christianity; in drawing closer the ties between chiefs and vassals, or even serfs, by the need which they mutually experienced of each other's services; in giving to the rude barons of Western Europe a more varied range of ideas, and a taste for at least the material civilization, which they beheld for the first time in the dominions of the Greek Emperors and the Saracen Soldans. M. Michelet remarks, that the effect even upon the religion of the time, was to soften its antipathies and weaken its superstitions. The hatred of Mussulmans was far less intense after the Crusade than at the beginning of it. The notion of a peculiar sanctity inherent in places, was greatly weakened when Christians had become the masters of the Holy Sepulchre, and found themselves neither better nor happier in consequence.

But these special results bear no proportion to the general start which was taken, about this time, by the human mind, and which, though it cannot be ascribed to the Crusade, was without doubt greatly favoured by it. That remarkable expedition was the first great event of modern times, which had an European and a Christian interest—an interest not of nation, or place, or rank, but which the lowest serfs had in common, and more than in common, with the loftiest barons. When the soil is moved, all sorts of seeds fructify. The serfs now began to think themselves human beings. The beginning of the great popular political movement of the middle ages—the formation of the *Communes*—is almost coincident with the First Crusade. Some fragments of the eminently dramatic history of this movement are related in the concluding portion of M. Thierry's 'Letters on the History of France.' Contemporaneously with this temporal enfranchisement began the emancipation of the human mind. Formidable heresies broke out: it was the era of Berengarius, who doubted Transubstantiation—of Roscelinus, the founder of Nominalism, and questioner of the received doctrine respecting the Trinity. The very answers of the orthodox to these heretical writings, as may be seen in M. Michelet,\* were lessons of free-thinking. The principle of free speculation found a still more remarkable representative, though clear of actual heresy, in the most celebrated of the schoolmen, Abailard. The popularity and European influence of his rationalizing metaphysics, as described by contemporary authorities, must surprise those who conceive the age as one of rare and difficult communications, and without interest in letters. To silence this one man, required the eminent religious ascendancy of the most illustrious churchman of the age, Bernard of Clairvaux. The acquirements and talents of the noble-minded woman, whose name is linked for all time with that of Abailard—a man, so far as we have the means of judging, not her superior even in intellect, and in every other respect unworthy of her—are illustrative of M. Michelet's views on the change which was taking place in the social condition and estimation of women :—

'The restoration of woman, which had commenced with Christianity, took place chiefly in the twelfth century. A slave in the East, even in the Greek gynæceum a recluse, emancipated by the jurisprudence of the Roman empire, she was recognized by the new religion as the equal of man. Still Christianity, but just escaped from the sensuality of Paganism, dreaded woman, and distrusted her; or rather, men were conscious

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\* Vol. ii. pp. 279, 280.

of weakness, and endeavoured by hardness and scornfulness to fortify themselves against their strongest temptation. . . . When Gregory VII. aimed at detaching the clergy from the ties of a worldly life, there was a new outburst of feeling against that dangerous Eve, whose seductions had ruined Adam, and still pursued him in his sons.

‘A movement in the contrary direction commenced in the twelfth century. Free mysticism undertook to upraise what sacerdotal severity had dragged in the mire. It was especially a Breton, Robert d’Arbrissel, who fulfilled this mission of love. He re-opened to women the bosom of Christ; he founded asylums for them; he built Fontévrault; and there were soon other Fontévraults throughout Christendom. . . .

There took place insensibly a great religious revolution. The Virgin became the deity of the world: she usurped almost all the temples and the altars. Piety turned itself into an enthusiasm of chivalrous gallantry. The mother of God was proclaimed pure and without taint. The Church of Lyons, always mystical in its tendencies, celebrated, in 1134, the feast of the Immaculate Conception—thus exalting woman in the character of divine maternity, at the precise time when Héloïse was giving expression, in her letters, to the pure disinterestedness of love. Woman reigned in heaven, and reigned on earth. We see her taking a part, and a leading part, in the affairs of the world. . . . Louis VII. dates his acts from the coronation of his wife Adela. Women sat as judges not only in poetical contests and courts of love, but, with and on a par with their husbands, in serious affairs: the King of France expressly recognized it as their right. . . . Excluded up to that time from successions by the feudal barbarism, they every where became admitted to them in the first half of the twelfth century: in England, in Castile, in Arragon, at Jerusalem, in Burgundy, Flanders, Hainault, Vermandois, Aquitaine, Provence, and the Lower Languedoc. The rapid extinction of males, the softening of manners, and the progress of equity, re-opened inheritances to women. They transported sovereignties into foreign houses, accelerated the agglomeration of states, and prepared the consolidation of great monarchies.’—(Vol. ii. pp. 297–302.)

Half a century further on, the scene is changed. A new act of the great drama is now transacting. The seeds, scattered fifty years before, have grown up and overshadow the world. We are no longer in the childhood, but in the stormy youth of free speculation:—

‘The face of the world was sombre at the close of the twelfth century. The old order was in peril, and the new had not yet begun. It was no longer the mere material struggle of the Pope and the emperor, chasing each other alternately from Rome, as in the days of Henry IV. and Gregory VII. In the eleventh century the evil was on the surface; in 1200, at the core. A deep and terrible malady had seized upon Christendom. Gladly would it have consented to return to the quarrel of investitures, and have had to combat only on the question of the ring and crosier. In Gregory’s time, the cause of the Church was the cause

of liberty; it had maintained that character to the time of Alexander III., the chief of the Lombard league. But Alexander himself had not dared to support Thomas Becket; he had defended the liberties of Italy, and betrayed those of England. The Church was about to detach herself from the great movement of the world. Instead of preceding and guiding it, as she had done hitherto, she strove to fix it, to arrest time on its passage, to stop the earth which was revolving under her feet. Innocent III. seemed to succeed in the attempt; Boniface VIII. perished in it.

‘A solemn moment, and of infinite sadness. The hopes which inspired the Crusade had abandoned the earth. Authority no longer seemed unassailable; it had promised, and had deceived. Liberty began to dawn, but in a hundred fantastical and repulsive shapes, confused and convulsive, multiform, deformed. . . .

‘In this spiritual anarchy of the twelfth century, which the irritated and trembling Church had to attempt to govern, one thing shone forth above others—a prodigiously audacious sentiment of the moral power and greatness of man. The hardy expression of the Pelagians—“Christ had nothing more than I; I, too, by virtue, can raise myself to divinity”—is reproduced in the twelfth century in barbarous and mystical forms. . . . Messiahs every where arise. . . . A Messiah appears in Antwerp, and all the populace follow him; another, in Bretagne, seems to revive the antient gnosticism of Ireland. Amaury of Chartres, and his Breton disciple, David of Dinan, teach that every Christian is materially a member of Christ; in other words, that God is perpetually incarnated in the human race. The Son, say they, has reigned long enough; let the Holy Ghost now reign. . . . Nothing equals the audacity of these doctors, who mostly teach in the University of Paris, (authorized by Philippe-Auguste in 1200.) Abailard, supposed to be crushed, lives and speaks in his disciple Peter Lombard, who from Paris gives the law to European philosophy; they reckon nearly five hundred commentators upon this schoolman. The spirit of innovation has now acquired two powerful auxiliaries. Jurisprudence is growing up by the side of theology, which it undermines; the Popes forbid the clergy to be professors of law, and, by so doing, merely open public teaching to laymen. The metaphysics of Aristotle are brought from Constantinople, while his commentators, imported from Spain, will presently be translated from the Arabic by order of the kings of Castile, and the Italian princes of the house of Suabia, Frederic II., and Manfred. This is no less than the invasion of Greece and the East into Christian philosophy. Aristotle takes his place almost beside the Saviour. At first prohibited by the Popes, afterwards tolerated, he reigns in the professorial chairs: Aristotle publicly, secretly the Arabs and the Jews, with the pantheism of Averroës and the subtleties of the Cabala. Dialectics enters into possession of all subjects, and stirs up all the boldest questions. Simon of Tournai teaches at pleasure the *pour* and the *contre*. One day when he had delighted the school of Paris, by proving marvellously the truth of the Christian religion, he suddenly exclaimed,

“O little Jesus, little Jesus! how I have glorified thy law! If I chose, I could still more easily depreciate it.”—(Vol. ii. pp. 392–396.)

He then vigorously sketches the religious enthusiasts of Flanders and the Rhine, the Vaudois of the Alps, and the Albigeois of Southern France, and proceeds:—

‘What must not have been, in this danger of the Church, the trouble and inquietude of its visible head? . . .

‘The Pope at that time was a Roman, Innocent III.: a man fitted to the time. A great lawyer, accustomed on all questions to consult established right, he examined himself, and believed that the right was on his side. And, in truth, the Church had still in her favour the immense majority—the voice of the people, which is that of God. She had actual possession, ancient, so ancient that it might be deemed prescriptive. The Church was the defendant in the cause, the recognized proprietor, who was in present occupancy, and had the title-deeds; the written law seemed to speak for her. The plaintiff was human intellect; but it came too late, and, in its inexperience, took the wrong road, chicaning on texts instead of invoking principles. If asked what it would have, it could make no intelligible answer. All sorts of confused voices called for different things, and most of the assailants wished to retrograde rather than to advance. In politics, their ideas were modelled on the ancient republics; that is, town liberties, to the exclusion of the country. In religion, some wished to suppress the externals of worship, and revert, as they said, to the Apostles; others went further back, and returned to the Asiatic spirit, contending for two gods, or preferring the strict unity of Islamism.’—(Pp. 419–21.)

And, after describing the popular detestation which pursued these heretics—

‘Such appeared at that time the enemies of the Church—and the Church was people’—(*l’église était peuple*.) ‘The prejudices of the people, the sanguinary intoxication of their hatred and their terror, ascended through all ranks of the clergy to the Pope himself. It would be too unjust to human nature to deem that egoism or class-interest alone animated the chiefs of the Church. No—all indicates, that in the thirteenth century they were still convinced of their right. That right admitted, all means seemed good to them for defending it. Not for a mere human interest did St Dominic traverse the regions of the south, alone and unarmed, in the midst of a sectarian population whom he doomed to death, courting martyrdom with the same avidity with which he inflicted it; and, whatever may have been in the great and terrible Innocent III. the temptations of pride and vengeance, other motives animated him in the crusade against the Albigeois and the foundation of the Dominican Inquisition.’—(Pp. 422, 3.)

The temporal means by which the Church obtained a brief respite from the dangers which beset it, consisted in letting loose against the rich and heretical South, the fanaticism and rapacity



of the North. The spiritual expedient, far the more potent of the two, was the foundation of the Mendicant Orders.

We are too much accustomed to figure to ourselves what are called religious revivals, as a feature peculiar to Protestantism and to recent times. The phenomenon is universal. In no Christian church has the religious spirit flowed like a perennial fountain; it had ever its flux and reflux, like the tide. Its history is a series of alternations between religious laxity and religious earnestness. Monastery itself, in the organized form impressed upon it by St Benedict, was one of the incidents of a religious revival. We have already spoken of the great revival under Hildebrand. Ranke has made us understand the religious revival within the pale of Romanism itself, which turned back the advancing torrent of the Reformation. As this was characterized by the foundation of the order of Jesuits, so were the Franciscans and Dominicans the result of a similar revival, and became its powerful instrument.

The mendicant orders—especially the most popular of them, the Franciscans—were the offspring of the freethinking which had already taken strong root in the European mind; but the freedom which they represented was freedom in alliance with the Church, rising up against the freedom which was at enmity with the Church, and anathematizing it. What is called, in France, mysticism—in England, religious enthusiasm—consists essentially in looking within instead of without; in relying upon an internal revelation from God to the individual believer, and receiving its principal inspirations from that, rather than from the authority of priests and teachers. St Francis of Assisi was such a man. Disowned by the Church, he might have been a heresiarch instead of a saint; but the Church needed men like him, and had the skill to make its instrument of the spirit which was preparing its destruction. ‘In proportion to the decline of authority,’ says M. Michelet, ‘and the diminution of the priestly influence on the popular mind, religious feeling, being no longer under the restraint of forms, expanded itself into mysticism.’\* Making room for these mystics in the ecclesiastical system itself, directing their enthusiasm into the path for which it peculiarly qualified them, that of popular preaching, and never parting with the power of repressing any dangerous excess in those whom it retained in its allegiance, the Papacy could afford to give them the rein, and indulge within certain limits their most unsacerdotal preference of grace to the law.

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\* Vol. iii. p. 195.

The career and character of St Francis and his early followers are graphically delineated by M. Michelet.\* As usual with devotees of his class, his great practical precept was the love of God; love which sought all means of demonstrating itself—now by ecstasies, now by austerities like those of an Indian fakere—but also by love and charity to all creatures. In all things which had life, and in many which had not, he recognized children of God: he invoked the birds to join in gratitude and praise; he parted with his cloak to redeem a lamb from the slaughter. His followers ‘wandered barefooted over Europe, always run after by the crowd: in their sermons, they brought the sacred mysteries, as it were, on the stage; laughing at Christmas, weeping on Good Friday, developing, without reserve, all that Christianity possesses of dramatic elements.’ The effect of such a band of missionaries must have been great in rousing and feeding dormant devotional feelings; they were not less influential in regulating those feelings, and turning into the established catholic channels those vagaries of private enthusiasm which might well endanger the Church, since they already threatened society itself. The spirit of religious independence had descended to the miserable, and was teaching them that God had not commanded them to endure their misery. It was a lesson for which they were not yet ripe. ‘Mysticism,’ says our author,† ‘had already produced its most terrible fruit, hatred of the law; the wild enthusiasm of religious and political liberty. This demagogic character of mysticism, which so clearly manifested itself in the *Jacqueries* of the subsequent ages, especially in the revolt of the Swabian peasants in 1525, and of the Anabaptists in 1538, appeared already in the ‘insurrection of the *Pastoureaux*,’ during the reign of St Louis. These unhappy people, who were peasantry of the lowest class, and, like all other insurgents of that class, perished miserably—*dispersi sunt, et quasi canes rabidi passim detruncati*, are the words of Matthew Paris—were avowed enemies of the priests, whom they are said to have massacred, and administered the sacraments themselves. They recognized as their chief, a man whom they called the grand master of Hungary, and who pretended to hold in his hand, which he kept constantly closed, a written commission from the Virgin Mary. So contradictory to history is that superficial notion of the middle ages, which looks upon the popular mind as strictly orthodox, and implicitly obedient to the Pope.

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\* Vol. ii. pp. 538—543.

† Ib. 579.

Though the Papacy survived, in apparently undiminished splendour, the crisis of which we have now spoken, the mental ascendancy of the priesthood was never again what it had been before. The most orthodox of the laity, even men whom the Church has canonized, were now comparatively emancipated; they thought *with* the Church, but they no longer let the Church think *for* them. This change in the times is exemplified in the character of St Louis—himself a lay brother of the Franciscan order; perhaps of all kings the one whose religious conscience was the most scrupulous, yet who learned his religious duty from his own strong and upright judgment, not from his confessor, nor from the Pope. He never shrank from resisting the Church when he had right on his side; and was himself a better sample, than any Pope contemporary with him, of the religious character of his age. The influences of the mystical spirit are easily discernible in his remarkable freedom, so rare in that age, from the slavery of the letter; which, as many anecdotes prove, he was always capable of sacrificing to the spirit, when any conflict arose between them.\*

We are obliged to pass rapidly over some other topics, which justice to M. Michelet forbids us entirely to omit. We could extract many passages more illustrative than those we have quoted of his powers as a writer and an artist; such as the highly finished sketch† of the greatness and ruin of the unfortunate house of Hohenstaufen. We prefer to quote the remarks, of greater philosophical interest, with which he winds up one great period of history, and introduces another.

‘The Crusade of St Louis was the last Crusade. The middle age had produced its ideal, its flower, and its fruit: the time was come for it to perish. In Philippe-le-Bel, grandson of St Louis, modern times commence: the middle age is insulted in Boniface VIII., the Crusade burned at the stake in the persons of the Templars.

‘Crusades will be talked about for some time longer, the word will be often repeated; it is a sounding word, good for levying tenths and taxes. But princes, nobles, and popes know well, among themselves, what to think of it. In 1327, we find the Venetian, Sanuto, proposing to the Pope a commercial crusade. “It is not enough,” he said, “to invade Egypt,” he proposed “to ruin it.” The means he urged was to reopen to the Indian trade the channel of Persia, so that merchandize might no longer pass through Alexandria and Damietta. Thus does the modern spirit announce its approach: trade, not religion, will soon become the moving principle of great expeditions.’—(Vol. ii. pp. 607, 8.)

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\* Vol. ii. p. 612.

† Ib. 587—589.

And further on, after quoting the bitter denunciation of Dante against the royal family of France—

‘ This furious Ghibelline invective, full of truth and of calumny, is the protest of the old perishing world against the ugly new world which succeeds it. This new world begins towards 1300; it opens with France, and with the odious figure of Philippe-le-Bel.

‘ When the French monarchy, founded by Philippe-Auguste, became extinguished in Louis XVI., at least it perished in the immense glory of a young republic, which, at its first onset, vanquished and revolutionized Europe. But the poor middle age, its Papacy, its chivalry, its feudality, under what hands did they perish? Under those of the attorney, the fraudulent bankrupt, the false coiner.

‘ The bitterness of the poet is excusable; this new world is a repulsive one. If it is more legitimate than that which it replaces, what eye, even that of a Dante, could see this at the time? It is the offspring of the decrepit Roman law, of the old imperial fiscality. It is born a lawyer, a usurer; it is a born Gascon, Lombard, and Jew.

‘ What is most revolting in this modern system, represented especially by France, is its perpetual self-contradiction, its instinctive duplicity, the naïve hypocrisy, so to speak, with which it attests by turns its two sets of principles, Roman and feudal. France looks like a lawyer in a cuirass, an attorney clad in mail; she employs the feudal power to execute the sentences of the Roman and canon law. If this obedient daughter of the Church seizes upon Italy and chastises the Church, she chastises her as a daughter, obliged in conscience to correct her mother’s misconduct.’—(Vol. iii. pp. 31, 2.)

Yet this revolting exterior is but the mask of a great and necessary transformation; the substitution of legal authority in the room of feudal violence and the *arbitrium* of the seigneur; the formation, in short, for the first time, of a government. This government could not be carried on without money. The feudal jurisdictions, the feudal armies, cost nothing to the treasury; the wages of all feudal services were the land: but the king’s judges and administrators, of whom he has now a host, must all be paid. ‘ It is not the fault of this government if it is ‘ greedy and ravenous. Ravenousness is its nature, its necessity, ‘ the foundation of its temperament. To satisfy this, it must ‘ alternately make use of cunning and force: the prince must be ‘ at once the Reynard and Isengrim of the old satire. To do him ‘ justice, he is not a lover of war: he prefers any other means of ‘ acquisition—purchase, for instance, or usury. He traffics, he ‘ buys, he exchanges; these are means by which the strong man ‘ can honourably plunder his weaker friends.’ \*

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\* Vol. iii. p. 42.

This need of money was, for several centuries, the *primum mobile* of European history. In England, it is the hinge on which our constitutional history has wholly turned: in France and elsewhere, it was the source, from this time forward, of all quarrels between the Kings and the Church. The clergy alone were rich, and money must be had. 'The confiscation of Church property was the idea of kings from the thirteenth century. 'The only difference is, that the Protestants took, and the Catholics made the Church give. Henry VIII. had recourse to schism—Francis I. to the *Concordat*. Who, in the fourteenth century, the King or the Church, was thenceforth to prey upon France?—that was the question.'—(Vol. iii. p. 50.)

To get money, was the purpose of Philip's quarrel with Boniface; to get money, he destroyed the Templars.

The proceedings against this celebrated Society occupy two most interesting chapters of M. Michelet's work. His view of the subject seems just and reasonable.

The suppression of the Order, if this had been all, was both inevitable and justifiable. Since the Crusades had ceased, and the crusading spirit died out, their existence and their vast wealth were grounded on false pretences. Among the mass of calumnies which, in order to make out a case for their destruction, their oppressor accumulated against them, there were probably some truths. It is not in the members of rich and powerful bodies which have outlived the ostensible purposes of their existence, that high examples of virtue need be sought. But it was not their private misconduct, real or imputed, that gave most aid to royal rapacity in effecting their ruin. What roused opinion against them—what gave something like a popular sanction to that atrocious trial in its early stages, before the sufferings and constancy of the victims had excited a general sympathy, was, according to our author, a mere mistake—a *mal-entendu*, arising from a change in the spirit of the times.

'The forms of reception into the Order were borrowed from the whimsical dramatic rites, the *mysteries*, which the ancient Church did not dread to connect with the most sacred doctrines and objects. The candidate for admission was presented in the character of a sinner, a bad Christian, a renegade. In imitation of St Peter, he denied Christ; the denial was pantomimically represented by spitting on the cross. The Order undertook to restore this renegade—to lift him to a height as great as the depth to which he had fallen. Thus, in the Feast of Fools, man offered to the Church which was to regenerate him, the homage even of his imbecility, of his infamy. These religious comedies, every day less understood, became more and more dangerous, more capable of scandalizing a prosaic age, which saw only the letter, and lost the meaning of the symbol.'—(Vol. iii. pp. 127, 128.)

This is not a *mère* fanciful hypothesis. M. Michelet has elsewhere shown that the initiation into the Guilds of Artificers, in the middle ages, was of this very character. The acolyte affected to be the most worthless character upon earth, and was usually made to perform some act symbolical of worthlessness: after which, his admission into the fraternity was to have the merit and honour of his reformation. Such forms were in complete harmony with the genius of an age, in which a transfer of land was not binding without the delivery of a clod—in which all things tended to express themselves in mute symbols, rather than by the conventional expedient of verbal language. It is the nature of all forms used on important occasions, to outlast, for an indefinite period; the state of manners and society in which they originated. The childlike character of the religious sentiment in a rude people, who know terror but not awe, and are often on the most intimate terms of familiarity with the objects of their adoration, makes it easily conceivable, that the ceremonies used on admission into the Order were established without any irreverent feeling, in the purely symbolical acceptance which some of the witnesses affirmed. The time, however, had past, when such an explanation would be understood or listened to. ‘What arrayed the whole people against them—what left them not a single defender among so many noble families to which they were related—was this monstrous accusation of denying and spitting on the cross. This was precisely the accusation which was admitted by the greatest number of the accused. The simple statement of the fact turned every one against them; every body signed himself, and refused to hear another word. Thus the Order, which had represented in the most eminent degree the symbolical genius of the middle age, died of a symbol misunderstood.’—(Vol. iii. p. 206.)

From this time the history of France is not, except in a far more indirect manner, the history of Europe and of civilization. The subordination of the Church to the state once fully established, the next period was mainly characterized by the struggles between the king and the barons, and final victory of the crown. On this subject France cannot represent English history, where the crown was ultimately the defeated instead of the victorious party; and the incidents of the contest are necessarily national, not European incidents. Here, therefore, having regard also to our necessary limits, our extracts from M. Michelet’s work may suitably close; although the succeeding volumes, which come down nearly to Louis XI., are not inferior in merit to those from which we have quoted; and

are even, as we before remarked, superior in the value of their materials—being grounded, in a great measure, upon the public documents of the period, and not, like previous histories, almost exclusively upon the Chronicles.

In what we have said, we have been far more desirous to make the work known, and recommend it to notice, than to criticise it. The latter could only become a needful service after the former had been accomplished. The faults, whether of matter or manner, of which M. Michelet can be accused, are not such as require being pointed out to English readers. There is much more danger lest they should judge too strictly the speculations of such a man; and turn impatiently from the germs of truth which often lurk even in the errors of a man of genius. This is, indeed, the more to be apprehended, as M. Michelet, apparently, has by no means the fear of an unsympathizing audience before his eyes. Where we require thoughts, he often gives us only allusions to thoughts. We continually come upon sentences, and even single expressions, which take for granted a whole train of previous speculation—often perfectly just, and perhaps familiar to French readers; but which in England would certainly have required to be set forth in terms, and cleared up by explanations.

His style cannot be fairly judged from the specimens we have exhibited. Our extracts were selected as specimens of his ideas; not of his literary merits; and none have been taken from the narrative part, which is, of course, the principal part of the work, and the most decisive test of powers of composition in a writer of history. We should say, however, of the style generally; that it is sparkling rather than flowing; full of expressiveness; but too continuously epigrammatic to carry the reader easily along with it; and pushing that ordinary artifice of modern French composition, the personification of abstractions, to an almost startling extent. It is not, however, though it is very likely to be taken for, an affected style; for affectation cannot be justly imputed, where the words are chosen, as is evidently the case here, for no purpose but to express ideas; and where, consequently; the mode of expression, however peculiar, grows from, and corresponds to, the peculiarities of the mode of thought.

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