

UNIVERSITY LIFE

IN THE

MIDDLE AGES

BY

REV. FATHER JOHN, O.S.F.C., B.A.



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DUBLIN :
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF IRELAND,
27 LOWER ABBEY STREET.

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WHEN the future historian comes to record the things which are characteristic of the days in which we live; when he comes to speak of the subjects which possessed a peculiar interest for us, he will undoubtedly be forced to accord a prominent place to the curiosity we exhibit in everything which appertains to the Middle Ages. Within the last twenty years, numbers of books, of very unequal merit, have accumulated on the subject. During that time, the libraries of Europe have been eagerly searched by a host of earnest workers, anxious to bring before the public every scrap of information which could in any way add to the knowledge we already possess. The result is, our curiosity is kept ever on the alert by the publication year by year of some old document or parchment, which has lain for ages undisturbed on shelves, or shuffled away into the dark drawers of lumber chests, hidden under the accumulating dust of centuries, Paul Sabatier, a non-Catholic, nevertheless an ardent and reverent student of the Middle Ages, and one who has done much to make the beauty and the heroism of those times understood in our day, compares this period, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to the twentieth year of life, with, as he says "its dreams, its poetry, its enthusiasm, its generosity, its daring." Yes, it was the age in which Dominic arose, and Francis dreamt his dream of a perfect life. It was the age of the troubadours and the crusaders; life was young, and men's hearts were daring. That was pre-eminently the heroic age. The age in which the value of sacrifice was felt and generous deeds adored. In it men experienced the presence of a hidden power, and were conscious that they lived surrounded by the unseen. In it Clare and Agnes prayed. In it Dante sang his sublime *Divina Comedia*. Is it wonderful, then, that we should be drawn to dip into the pages which paint for us the manners and customs, the modes of life of this interesting period?

But a desire to satisfy a curiosity; a wish to find out how people then lived; what were the motives which inspired and shaped their actions; these are but a portion of the causes which make us take an interest in the Middle Ages. A much more selfish and utilitarian view sometimes forces us to study them, viz., the conviction, which is becoming clearer to us day by day, that in the past lies the keys by which we unlock the secrets of the present; that a knowledge of the past is essential to a proper understanding of the customs, the laws, the institutions, and the governments which direct and rule our lives to-day.

Historical Exploration

As the geographical explorer travels eagerly up the beds of great rivers to investigate their sources, to examine the rivulet and tiny streams whence they spring, so does the true historical explorer travel eagerly back the great stream of time to examine the tiny sources of the great and complex institutions which are our proud inheritance to day. This age of ours is dominated by the theory of development. It has become almost a canon with us, that to understand anything aright, we must have a knowledge of its genesis. A large part of the intellectual energies of the day are expended in quest of origins. It may be useful then, to trace the origin of these great and widespread institutions which play such an important part in the working of our modern world, viz., universities, whose import and meaning we cannot hope to fully grasp without some knowledge of their origin and early development. This study will help us also to understand more fully the meaning of many other phases of medieval life and history with which that of the university was inseparably connected. It would, of course, be impossible within the limits of this paper to touch on many of the sources which we may appeal to for information on our subject. There are a few authors, however, whose works have done so much to illustrate and give a true conception of university life in mediaeval times, that this sketch would be altogether incomplete without some reference to them. Amongst those, first and above all, must be mentioned the brilliant German Dominican scholar, Father Denifle, whose death a short time ago was referred to in almost all the periodicals of Europe as one of the greatest losses historical research had sustained in recent years. This is no exaggeration. If you consult that great summary of information, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, you will find the author of the article on universities practically confessing that the portion dealing with mediaeval times is merely a resume of Denifle's work. Rashdall, who has written the standard work in English on the subject, over and over again admits his indebtedness to the writings of the great German Friar. In the Preface to his learned work, the *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, he says: "Denifle is the only



modern writer to whom I am under important obligations Without his work, mine . . . would have been very incomplete and inadequate."

Although, however, Rashdall's is an able work, yet it could have been greatly improved had the author possessed more sympathy and love for the men of the Middle Ages. We miss in it the enthusiasm which fascinates us in the pages of men like Sabatier. After these authors, a number of others might be mentioned whose works give valuable information, such as Augusta Theodosia Drane, whose book, *Christian Schools and Scholars*, has for over twenty years held a high place in Catholic literature. In the historical essays of Newman on University life he shows himself a master as in every other subject he dealt with.

In *The Life and Labours of St. Thomas of Aquin*, by Roger Bede Vaughan, Catholics will find a good exposition of the teaching methods in medieval universities.

Clarke and Willis's *Architectural History of Cambridge University* contains much information on the English schools, etc. The origin and development of the university will now be dealt with first; then we shall endeavour to draw a picture of student life in mediaeval times. Universities are a growth of the Middle Ages; the outcome of its social conditions, called forth in answer to its social wants. To understand these conditions more fully, it will be necessary to treat shortly of causes which were in

operation long before, and out of which grew the conditions which gave rise to universities.

Towards the end of the sixth century the ancient civilization of Rome had almost ceased to exist. For ages her enervated legionaries had been falling back before the onward rush of fierce northern hordes, who were destined to sweep over her vast empire, and, like clouds of locusts, desolate and destroy the fair provinces her brains and hands had done so much to civilize. Fierce Franks occupied the ancient kingdom of Gaul. Goths and Visigoths, rushing on still further, poured through the passes of the Pyrenees, and, like lava streams, wrought ruin in the golden-grained fields of Spain. A still darker tragedy was being enacted in Italy. Its fertile provinces were too fair and tempting to be overlooked by the barbarian armies which were overrunning the rest of Europe. From the snow-capped heights of the Alps they came down year after year in ever-increasing swarms; Lombards, Huns, and Vandals, an overwhelming throng; and, like a devastating avalanche, rolled on into the plains of Italy, working ruin and desolation up to the very walls of Rome. The world's most famous empire folded up her standards, unable to avert the approaching end. Rome, the once proud mistress of the world, died, strangled in the unrelenting grip of these fierce northern barbarians. Europe settled down to the night of ignorance and torpor, known as the Dark Ages.

BEYOND THE DARK AGES

If we wish to know how Europe again rose; how were preserved those sparks of knowledge, which in the dawn of the eleventh century lit the lamp of civilization, which has since shone with a light that will never fade, we must consult such works as the fascinating pages of Montalembert. Yes; the chapter which connects ancient and modern civilization forms the history of the Monks of the West. By their labours, the Church had gradually organised itself in most of the countries. During the eighth and ninth centuries, we find dioceses being established everywhere, having their Bishops, and what were called Cathedral schools; and so things went on till the dawn already referred to, *i.e.*, the eleventh century.

It cannot escape the notice of anybody who has made an attempt to read the world's history that its story is by no means uniform. Through it there run strange pulsations, which we call movements. For ages, perhaps, with a people things scarcely move; life is dull; the march of intellect is slow. During such periods the great mass of the people carry on their dull, monotonous existence, uninspired with a wish for anything higher; content to follow in the beaten track of a well-nigh worn-out tradition. Then there comes a change; the dry bones get life; the vital spark glints forth; the pulse of life beats high at such periods; great men appear—the artist and the thinker, the

poet and philosopher, all the chosen of the world; they come forth to speak the thoughts with which throbs the great heart of humanity.

To these periods we owe Greek Philosophy, its poetry and art; to one of them we owe the golden age of Roman literature. To such a period also we owe the extraordinary activity which characterised mediaeval life, and the various institutions in which its energy expressed itself, in the founding of cathedrals, religious orders, and universities.

In dealing, then, with universities, we must remember that we are dealing with a something which was the result of one of those mysterious awakenings or movements, and which we may style mysterious, because the man has yet to appear who will adequately explain them. They are like life itself—facts given to us to use and make the most of. If we remember that man's works in any age form the language in which the spirit of the period speaks, it will help us to interpret the meaning of many institutions we owe to the Middle Ages. They embody for us the modes in which the awakening and expanding spirit of the times sought to express its instincts. Thus the political instinct of mediaeval times called into being constitutional kingship, trial by jury, and representative government. Its religious instinct sought expression and embodiment in the founding of cathedrals and the creation of religious orders. To its educational instinct we owe universities. To the Middle Ages we are indebted for all these institutions—which may to-day be compared to great rivers, whose sources are in those interesting times, flowing on ever since, and by their influence fertilising and nourishing the life of man.

UNIVERSITIES EMERGE

The first proofs we get of the awakening of the educational activity comes to us in the appearance almost simultaneously, at different centres, of remarkable teachers. Men like Abelard, Roselinus, and William of Champeaux began to appear in the Cathedral School of Paris, creating and fanning into flame the theological and dialectical movements that suddenly appeared. Men like Truerius and Gratian were at the same time creating the legal revival at Bologna; the former lectured on civil, the latter on Canon law. Salerno had suddenly obtained a world-renowned reputation as a medical school, on account of the labours of such men as Constantinus Africanus and Norman Robert Guiseard. It is admitted by many writers that one of the greatest influences at work in the building up of a medical school at Salerno was the Benedictine Convent of Monte Casino, not very far distant, where, from the earlier times, dabbling in medical lore by experimenting on the virtues of plants, was a favourite occupation of the monks. It is somewhat remarkable that the monks, who were supposed to despise life, should have

been the first in modern times to cast round for means of preserving it.

Of course there are other centres where the revival of these studies began also to appear. These, however, are the principal, and their subsequent history, particularly that of Paris and Bologna, so modified all others, that we are justified in regarding them as the earliest homes of universities. Now, great teachers were naturally bound to draw great crowds of students round them. On the other hand, large centres of student-life reacted on teachers, in such a way that those conscious of exceptional power would go to wherever they were sure to find the largest audience. These, then, were the two causes—the power exceptional teachers had to give rise to large masses of student-life, and the correlative power student-centres had to draw teachers to them—these were the two causes which acted and reacted on each other during the eleventh and early part of the twelfth centuries, creating those centres of learning out of which afterwards grew universities. The universities thus developed under laws analogous to those by which large towns and great commercial centres were evolved. Able men in favourable positions created industries, which, in their turn, caused others to be started round them ; business centres being established, attracted to them speculators and men of ability, whose brains and energy helped still further to increase their importance. So was it also with great educational centres.

We have now got so far as the establishment of large centres of education, but we have not yet got the university. Students came from all parts of Europe to these centres, and this was the reason why they get the name *Studia Generalia* and not, as has been often wrongly asserted, because there were lecturers and faculties in them for different subjects. This latter, of course, soon became an essential characteristic of them ; for, naturally, amongst large bodies of teachers and pupils, all subjects would come to be discussed and taught. Even when these *studia generalia* became fully developed universities, they still continued to retain this name. Our word “university,” or the Latin “*universitas*,” was a general word for corporation, number, or body, whether of students, tradesmen, or citizens, and came to be restricted to a particular kind of educational corporation, in obedience to the great law by which, in the history of every language, some general words get a specialised meaning. Thus, in early times, “*monachus*” or “monk” simply meant “living alone,” and was just as applicable to a convict in a solitary dungeon as it was to the holiest man that lived in the Thebaid ; and “*conventus*” or “convent,” simply meant a “gathering,” and could be as correctly applied to a band of desperadoes living together for purposes of highway robbery, as to a number of virgins consecrated to God. The history of how *universitas* came to be applied to

the *studium generale* will be our next step in tracing the development of this institution.

MEDIAEVAL GUILDS

A prominent characteristic of mediaeval times was the formation of unions amongst all classes of the people. These are generally referred to by writers on the Middle Ages as guilds. They were something like our trades bodies or trades unions of to-day; and, like those latter, too, they were formed for protection and the fellowship they afforded, to resist oppression, and to fight for their constitutional rights. A still more remote origin for them may be sought in the idea that they were part of the great European movement which then showed itself amongst the lower orders, to rebel against and free themselves from the clan and feudal systems. To this great movement must also be traced the development of corporations of all kinds ; the formation of municipal life and city commonwealths; the commencement of mediaeval republics and early democracies. Each of these guilds was called a *universitas*.

It was only natural that teachers and students should, in imitation of these unions, form unions and guilds amongst themselves ; also, furthermore, that they should lay down certain tests which aspirants should be put to before being admitted to the guild; and, last of all, that there should be a ceremony of reception into it. In all these we have the sources and prototypes of our examinations and ceremonies of conferring degrees. Now, just as the trades guilds gradually organised and established an apprenticeship for a number of years, through which aspirants had to go before being admitted as fully qualified tradesmen, so the university guild established and organised an apprenticeship also, through which students had to go before being allowed to present themselves for the ceremony which made them fully qualified university men. Here is the germ of the university courses at the present day. But what was the meaning or what were the privileges of a fully qualified university man ? The explanation of this brings us almost to the last step in our study of the building-up of a university. The student who stood the test and got received into the guild got conferred upon him the privilege of being allowed to teach. He became a recognised teacher. Now, Paris and Bologna being world-famous schools, teachers who qualified in them were gladly recognised and received into any of the lesser schools. Hence the Paris and Bologna degree came to be looked upon as having a world-wide validity. By it the recipient got the “*Jus ubique docendi*” —the right to teach everywhere, or be recognised as a fully qualified master in all other schools.

There is one more point which we must touch upon before we grasp the full



import of a mediaeval university. It will be observed that, so far, universities or teaching guilds have no privileges to distinguish them from any other guilds, beyond the fact that their aims were purely educational. They did, however, develop and acquire a characteristic which completely distinguished them from all other guilds, which gave them an influence far beyond all others, and on account of which the word "*universitas*" or "university," which was originally a general word applicable to all guilds alike, came to have a specialised meaning, and came to be applied to this particular class of teaching guild, as the "*universitas*" or university *par excellence*. This characteristic consisted in the wonderful independence they developed. As the old cathedral schools grew into universities, and as the various characteristics already touched upon were being developed, there was also growing concomitantly with them a tendency, in virtue of which these institutions eventually freed themselves from external control, grew into independent corporations, having power to make their own laws, to punish their own subjects, to confer distinctions, to sue and be sued in law. While other guilds remained ever part of the township or municipality in which they were formed, and were subject to its authority, it was the privilege and the glory of the teaching guild to free itself from authority, to be independent, to become its own master, to be an *imperium in imperio*. This fact is so exceptional that we are tempted to ask how did the university obtain this privilege? The question can only be answered by a refer-

ence to that great world-power, whose darling the growing university was; whose bounteous hand was ever ready to shower privileges upon it, under whose protecting wing it grew, whose strong arm was ever ready and often put forth to defend its rights—this was none other than the power of the Catholic Church. In Newman's words, "the Church was necessary for its integrity."

To show in any adequate manner how this power intervened to protect and strengthen the growing university in the Middle Ages, it would be necessary to go into the history of the individual institutions, a task one can scarcely be expected to undertake in a sketch which merely aims at tracing out the plan according to which in the Middle Ages universities were evolved.

The University, then, is one of the grand and glorious institutions which the world owes to the genius and organising spirit of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. Someone may be tempted to ask at what date exactly was the history of the individual institutions, a task one can scarcely be expected to undertake in a sketch which merely aims at tracing out the plan according to which in the Middle Ages universities were evolved. To this it may be answered that it is impossible to assign a definite date; in fact, to ask such a question argues a complete ignorance of the methods of historical enquiry. However, to abuse a person for asking a question one is unable to answer is scarcely according to the method of common politeness; so, instead of doing so, we shall proceed to give the best answer we can. It will be seen from all that has been said that the University is an organic growth, whose childhood was the Cathedral school, whose manhood was attained in the fully developed university. To ask, then, when did the growing organism become a university, is the same as to ask when does the growing child become a man. At best we can only approximate towards a definite date; and, since the Cathedral schools at Paris, Bologna, and Salerno reached their full development in the renaissance of the twelfth century, the middle of that period must be taken as the nearest approach to the establishment of universities.

GROWTH OF UNIVERSITIES

We have thus tried to sketch the manner in which the first and earliest universities were built up. Soon all other schools, consciously or unconsciously, put themselves to imitate them, and to secure for themselves the privileges they enjoyed. Many of what afterwards became great universities owe their origin to large bodies of teachers migrating, and establishing in different places the methods of teaching and organisation of these parent universities. That which usually determined the place at which the latter settled was the presence of a school or small educational centre, which gave them an opening and home for their work. Thus Oxford was from time immemorial a place of some importance as an educational establishment, but its origin as a university dates, according to Rashdall, from

in or about 1167, when it was formed by a number of English teachers who had at that time to leave the University of Paris and return to their native land, owing to troubles between Henry II. and Thomas a Becket. These, according to the above authority, repaired to Oxford, and there introduced the Parisian methods, thus establishing a university. Cambridge was subsequently founded by teachers seceding from Oxford. However, teachers or pupils did not possess the right to found universities indiscriminately when and where they wished. The Church soon reserved to herself this right; but the Emperor, who was the representative of the secular authority und Church, exercised it also. Thus we find Frederick II establishing a *studium generale* in Naples in 1224, granting to it all the privileges and rights of the great parent universities. In 1229, Pope Gregory IX. gave a bull for the founding of a university school at Toulouse. From this out it became recognised that for the founding of a *studium gene rale* a Papal bull or Emperor's edict was necessary. Even the older universities, Paris and Bologna, subsequently applied for and obtained these bulls to strengthen their positions.

Our next step, if we wish to picture in an adequate manner university life in mediaeval times, should be to touch upon its teaching, and, incidentally, upon some of the great schoolmen, a subject which would also involve some reference to the part played in the university by the two great religious Orders, who are themselves such remarkable products of that truly extraordinary age—the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The former, however, is no less a subject than the history of mediaeval thought, and the latter would, in order to give any passable picture of it, require such a treatment, as would much exceed the limits of this sketch. These two great subjects then must remain untouched. Before, however, proceeding to treat of student life, a word must be said on another development which soon showed itself in the university, and was destined to have an important bearing on its subsequent history. This was the development of the college system.

THE 'COLLEGE' SYSTEM

It would be a great mistake to suppose that in the early days of university life there were such things as the colleges and great halls which impress us so much to-day in all university towns. In the earliest times the university was simply a teaching body or guild, taking up its abode, usually in a special quarter, of a city or town, but possessing no buildings or property. Thus, in Paris university, teachers and pupils resided in a particular part of the city, subsequently known as the Latin quarter; just as the Jews reside in a particular place in our modern towns, or, without wishing to be uncomplimentary to university men of olden times, just like the Chinese congregate in a particular

spot in the great cities of America to-day.

They had no halls, schools, or colleges. The students usually resided in tenement houses, where they elected one from their number to look after the rent. He was called the principal. Now, numbers of students were very poor, and the idea arose that it would be a very charitable work to found and endow lodging-houses or hospices for such. In founding these institutions, the ordinary lodging-houses were taken as models; one was elected principal also. These latter endowed houses were the originals and prototypes of what afterwards became such an important part of the university—its colleges. These were the originals of those magnificent educational institutions, Merton, Exeter, Oriel, The Queen's, All Souls, and Magdalen at Oxford; and of Pembroke, Gonville, Trinity, King's College, and St. Catherine's, at Cambridge. Their present principals are the successors of those who were elected by the students in olden times to look after the rent. The men who now enjoy the well-paid fellowships of these institutions have their prototypes in the poor scholars, who, in these lodging-houses, were accustomed to receive an annual allowance for their support. The fact that universities in early times had no property and no permanent abode played an important part in their development. Having nothing to hamper them, the authorities were always free to work in every emergency the great lever by which they lifted their institution into independence and gradually obtained and consolidated its privileges. If they were thwarted in their aims, or injured in their rights, they simply struck work and left the town. The latter usually relented and repented, again invited the university back, and acceded to its wishes. The more one studies the Middle Ages, the more one is struck by the wonderful greatness they exhibit. We have already said that in a knowledge of them lies the key to a proper understanding of our modern civilisation. The men of the Middle Ages, as has been pointed out, laid the foundations of the institutions which most perfectly express our aspirations in the three great departments of politics, religion, and education. For the first, they created parliaments and constitutional kingships; for the second, cathedrals and religious orders; for the third, universities. By these three institutions the life of Christendom has for the last seven hundred years grown and prospered. The struggle to maintain these in their purity constitutes the world's history since—a contest between light and darkness, right and lawless might.

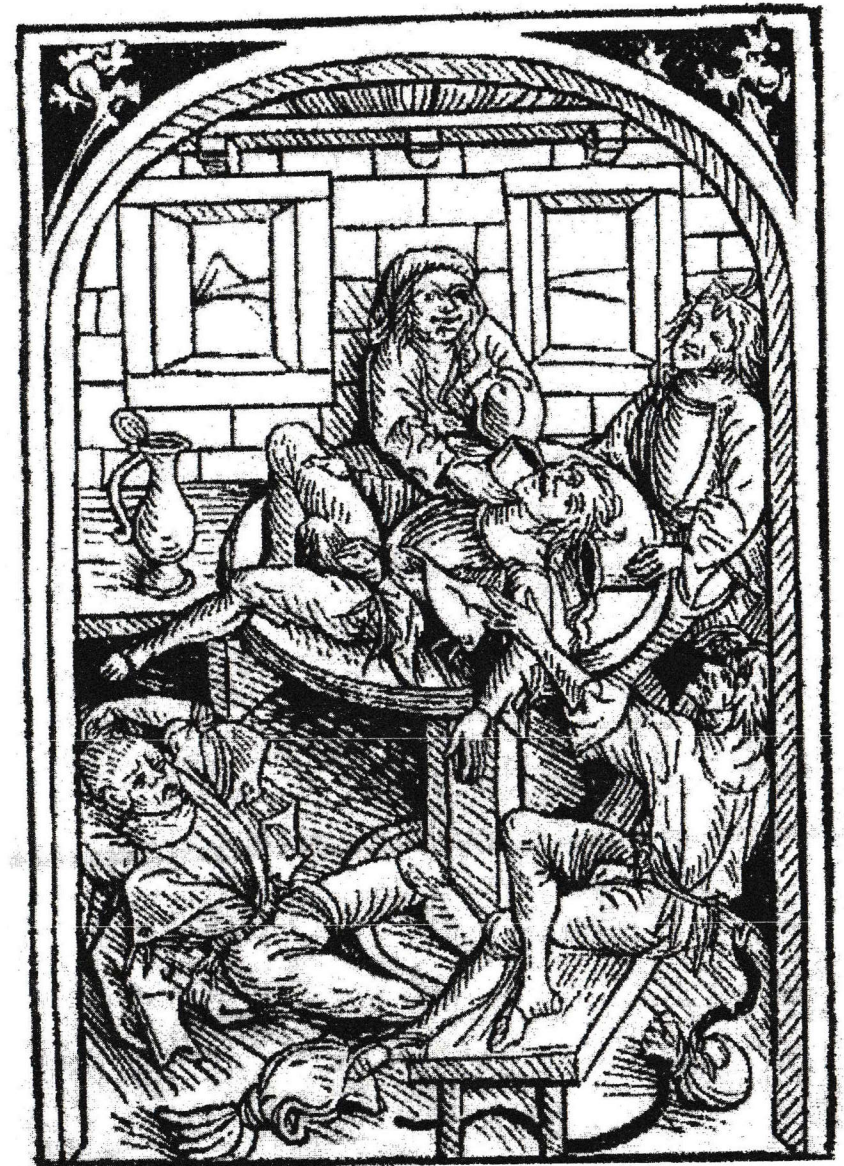
HOW STUDENTS LIVED

Having dealt, then, with the university in its origin and development, we shall now deal with the manner in which the students lived, and a few other questions connected with the subject. When we remember the danger and

difficulty of travelling in those days, we can form some idea of the all-consuming love of study which drove thousands of young men, year after year, to brave every peril in search of an education; which tempted them to commit themselves to frail crafts across stormy seas, or encounter on land the no less formidable perils of meeting on their way banditti and highwaymen, who were ever on the watch to relieve these young people of their wealth. On this account students usually went up in Bodies to the University. The more daring, and those in quest of adventure, often travelled by themselves. Pathetic stories come down to us of the destitute condition of some of the poorer students. We must remember that the University was open to all, irrespective of their condition. Some had to beg their way thither, and in the same manner support themselves while there, unless they were fortunate enough to get into the lodging-houses or hospices founded and endowed by some benefactor expressly for their benefit. To help a poor student on his way to the University was then considered a very laudable form of charity, but it became open to abuses; hence we find it legislated for in the enactments of the times. It was found that a number of useless vagabonds went sometimes wandering through the country, passing themselves off as students travelling to or from the University, and profiting by the hospitality with which people were over ready to receive and entertain a student. Hence licences to beg were issued by the University authorities, and no one could be regarded as a genuine poor student unless he could show such a licence.

Students came to the Universities usually between the ages of twelve and sixteen, but, of course, many University men did not begin their course till a much more advanced age. The time they had to spend before graduating varied with different faculties. By a faculty was meant the right or power in a particular body to give instruction in a particular subject; to conduct examinations; to confer on aspirants qualifications such as Licentiate, Doctor, and Magister. The University was a combination of all the faculties.

The "Faculties," and hence, also, the professors and students, were usually divided into four groups—the "Superior," comprising the faculties of Theology, Canon Law, and Medicine, and the "Inferior," embracing that of Arts. This latter was made up of the four "Nations"—France, England, Picardy, and Normandy. The three superior faculties were presided over by their respective Deans. Each nation was governed by its Proctor. The vote of the University went by a majority of the Faculties, that of the Arts Faculty being determined by a vote of the nations amongst themselves. The Faculty of Arts, however, always had the greatest influence, possibly owing to its great antiquity. It was made up of the old Tritium and Quadrivium of the Benedictine and early cathedral schools. While dealing with this matter, it



Typical Medieval University Students

may be well to say a few words on the relation of the Chancellor to the University, particularly to that of Paris. It is not part of our business to trace the various steps by which this important personage rose from the small position he held as secretary, or notary in the Episcopal Palace of the sixth and seventh centuries to the high one he occupied in the University of the twelfth and thirteenth. In the early cathedral schools the Chancellor was supreme authority under the Bishop. With him lay the power to grant or refuse licence to teach. Now, when within these same schools the University made its appearance, the Chancellor naturally tried to exercise his ancient privileges, but the teaching guild was too strong for him; it gradually curtailed his powers. Towards the end of the twelfth century we find the teachers "recommending" to the Chancellor those of their pupils whom they themselves thought fit to receive such a licence. Towards the end of the thirteenth even this right to grant a licence is gone from him, the "Faculties" having taken it into their own hands; from henceforth his position was more or less an honorary one. The constitution of the University of Bologna differed in many respects from that of Paris; and this was the result of the different circumstances under which they rose and developed. The limits of our space do not permit us to go very deeply into the point; but the main distinction between them came from the fact that the Bologna University was founded by a guild which was made up of a combination of foreign students, whereas Paris grew directly from the teaching guild within its walls, who always held the ruling and shaping of its destiny within their own hands.

INITIATION CEREMONIES

We have seen how the conferring of degrees grew out of the ceremonies of reception into the teaching body. Throughout Europe we find there was also a ceremony of reception amongst the students. This varied in different Universities; but underlying the various forms of it was the idea that the newcomer was unworthy to be received and looked upon as a student until he underwent a certain transformation, or, we might say, purification. A good idea of student initiation can be got from a description of the reception of a freshman under the name of "bejaunus," which, in the Middle Ages, was by far the most common form of the ceremony. The word "bejaunus" meant a mythical yellow-horned animal, which the newly-arrived was supposed to be until the students cut off these appendages and softened down many other rough points their victim was supposed to possess. In some places the unfortunate newcomer had to submit to the humiliation of allowing himself to be dressed in skins of wild animals, and actually decked out with horns. Some old pictures of the ceremony still exist, in which the students are represented taking off the horns and the other

undesirable integuments. For this service the object of the ceremony had to reward his benefactors by providing a feast, to attain which latter object must have been in the beginning one of the strongest reasons for getting it up. This student initiation had slight variations in different Universities. Thus, for instance, at Avignon, the newcomer had to submit to the further humiliation of receiving, as the old chronicler puts it, "a few blows of a book, or," he naively adds, apparently seeing no difference between them, "a frying pan." It will be noticed that the idea of a freshman being a "yellow-horn." is reproduced in our notion of a "green-horn." The giving of feasts by anyone who received an honour in the University was a common custom in mediaeval times. Thus Cambrensis, well known from the lying reports he has written of Ireland and the Norman Conquest, tells us that he feasted the professors and students in Oxford on the occasion of their paying him the compliment of listening to him reading his work. After the ceremony of reception by the students, the freshman wrote his name on the *matricula*, and took an oath to obey the Rector. He also paid a small fee to the common funds, after which he became a student of the University, and might attend lectures.

Study and lectures were gone through, principally, in the morning. In the early days of University life the professor lectured to his pupils in a hall, hired or lent for the occasion. This hall was often the refectory or chapter-house of some convent or monastery in the vicinity of the University.

STUDENT HARDSHIPS AND DIVERSIONS

Many hardships had to be borne by the students in these halls. Instead of a boarded floor, they had to put up with a cold, tiled one. The idea of adding to their comforts the luxury of fires did not occur to the most pleasure-loving amongst them. The necessity of fires ought to have been apparent, since there was in those days no such thing as glass in the windows; the latter were simply openings in the wall to allow in air and light. Forms or chairs were then undreamt of; in their places bundles of straw were used, which the students sat or reclined on as best they could. In the cold winter months sawdust was spread over the floor. This was turned over now and then in the year with a rake, possibly to bury the microbes, who must, in those days, have had a very good time. From what we have been able to glean, however, the men of the Middle Ages were but little concerned about these microbes. It was the custom of the times to eat but twice in the day, so they had no such thing as breakfast; they simply lived on dinner and supper. The regulations as to how the students were to conduct themselves at meals are curious and interesting. For example, at Cambridge, boys were forbidden to soil with their fingers the towels or napkins supplied to them at table. It must have

been somewhat of a difficulty to observe the law, since the man who invented forks was not yet born. These and other like details revolt the tender feelings of a certain class of very refined people in our day. They burst forth into really eloquent tirades on the barbarous life of the Middle Ages. Well, everyone to his taste; but perhaps if the ideal man could appear, and were asked which was the more barbarous, the simple, natural life of the Middle Ages, or our modern enervating modes of existence, with their numerous and every day rapidly increasing artificial wants—it is not improbable that his answer would scarcely be complimentary to us. On the whole, the student's life was very interesting. In the first place, rural life and life in the small towns was very dull. The elaborate displays in the shape of tournaments were beyond the means of the great body of the people, and could only be indulged in by the wealthy. The various occupations, amusements and sports which brighten the lives of even the poorest at present were then unknown. Hence every young boy who felt the wish to rise above his dull surroundings; any who had a desire for a bit of social life; all who were in quest of adventure; all who felt the diviner fire of awakening intelligence; all the choicest spirits of the day, were attracted to University towns. We must remember, too, that the University was a great agent in breaking clown the barriers which divided the rich from the poor. Whatever faults the aristocracy of the time possessed they had this, amongst other redeeming qualities, they honoured the man of ability and education, whatever may have been the social grade from which he rose. The numerous examples we have of the poorest rising to the highest positions in those times will be inexplicable when we remember how the great body of them were treated, unless we grasp this idea of the universal honour in which the educated man was held. The poor were always welcome at the University. It was one of their great stepping-stones to power and influence. The great work Universities did in those times to lift up the down-trodden has not been always done justice to by many who have undertaken to write on the subject. Let us select one of the many examples handed down to us illustrating this phase of University life. It is taken from an old French chronicle, and refers to the twelfth century.

A STORY FROM PARIS UNIVERSITY

Towards the middle of that century, there lived at Sully, in one of the provinces of France, a bright young peasant lad. As he grew up he began to feel within himself some of the strange unrest and yearning which was drawing so many of his companions to the University of Paris. He, too wanted to see the great world, and set out without a penny for the French capital. Arriving there, he managed to support himself by begging. At the same time he became one of the most eager students at the University.

Soon his ability came to be recognised. He eventually finished his brilliant course by being decorated with the doctorship. Then, in his turn, he began to lecture. Crowds gathered to hear him. His fame spread through Paris and over France. Rumours of his success reached his aged mother far away in the province. She determined that before she died she would go to hear him. Setting out, as her son did years before, she trusted for support to the charity of the people. Clothed in her poor, worn peasant dress, she arrived in the brilliant capital, and asked to be brought to the University, as she wanted to see the great Doctor, who, she said, was her son. Some charitable ladies, taking pity on her, brought her to their home, gave her refreshments, then threw over her shoulders one of their own gorgeous cloaks. Thus attired, she was led into the University Hall, where the Doctor was lecturing before a crowded audience. When told she was his mother, the great man said: "This cannot be my mother; my mother was a poor peasant woman; she wore no fine clothes like these." They then removed the cloak, and there stood before him, aged by the years, the mother he had not seen since childhood. "This," he exclaimed, "is indeed my mother"; and, continues the chronicle, "the thing spread through the city and did good honour to the master, who afterwards became Bishop of Paris."

He was a great man. Paris and the Catholic world owed him much. He is known to-day in history as Maurice of Sully, the man who built the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

Hundreds of like stories might be related, illustrating the life of those strange, romantic times. Of course, the stimulating interest, which was so characteristic of Universities, drew to them many reckless spirits, whose lives and actions could scarcely be taken as a picture of what University life was. Unfortunately for the history of these institutions, the crimes and lawless actions of these men, being altogether the exception and unusual, made, at the time, the greatest impression, and on that account were more liable to be recorded than the steady, noble work which was the general routine. The result is that many historians, finding records of lawlessness and crime, have fastened on to these, and produced pictures which are as untrue to what life really was at the University, as the picture would be which the future historian would draw of the city life of the present day, if, for his information, he consulted only the proceedings of the police courts.

It would be interesting to dwell for a few moments on this point; for we ought to be on our guard to take at their true value works written on the Middle Ages by men who have gone to study them with the preconceived idea that they are to find there lawlessness, crime, and disorder. They have found them, enough and to spare. What age is free from them? The man, however, who is impressed with these alone in any age is unworthy to write about it. If

we want to judge the Middle Ages, let us judge them by the works they wrought. "By their works you shall know them," said the Greatest of the Children of Men. The ages could not have been bad which laid the foundations of those fanes of prayer, the cathedrals of Europe, whose lofty arches and heaven-ascending spires merely express in stone the noble aims which inspired and ruled the lives of those who built them. The ages could not have been bad which produced Dominic and Francis; which have given to the world the religious mysticism of the school of St. Victor and the clear, definite expression of Catholic theology as it comes down to us in the writings of St. Thomas. There must have been something in the ages in which sprang up the great mediaeval religious orders and the great mediaeval universities.

RULES, DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

Although, then, an account of the University life of the Middle Ages would be incomplete without some reference to the abuses which must, necessarily have now and then crept in amongst the students; yet, if we give too much prominence to details of them, we shall get but a one-sided view of University life as it really was. Some prohibitions in college enactments point to the fact that in those days boys were boys as they are in our own. An old document discovered in the Archives of Leipsic contains a proclamation against various abuses, and gives us an idea of the various forms of practical joking which must then have existed. Amongst other things, students were forbidden to indulge in the practice "of throwing water out of the windows on passers-by; wandering at night, and beating the watchman; causing disturbance at the conferring of degrees, etc"; also proclamations against "wrestling, boxing, and the like; against going around in masks during carnival time," and a curious one "against interfering with the hangman at his work."

Rashdall tells us that what struck him as very strange in his study of mediaeval life was the amount of liberty given to students. All, after lectures, were quite free to go where they liked, provided they were in at the appointed time, *i.e.*, about nine o'clock in the winter and ten o'clock in the summer. This should be taken as a proof of good behaviour, otherwise there would have been more supervision over them. Punishment by flogging was unknown in the early Universities. The usual form of punishment consisted in what was known as "sconcing." For ordinary breaches of discipline students were "sconced," *i.e.*, forfeited something, such as wine or other desirables which, by a convenient arrangement, was divided amongst their companions. For greater crimes the penalty was expulsion and

excommunication. From Leipsic, too, comes the news that as early as the sixteenth century, at least, there were in universities college balls and dances. An old record gives a description of a sort of university ball got up, as the chronicler states, for the purpose of introducing to the students "the most honourable and elegant daughters of senators, magnates, and citizens." Young girls seem to have been held in very high esteem in those days; for an old college enactment lays down the following quaint regulation for the direction of the students:

"They shall sit as quiet as girls, and shall abstain from dancing, shouting, or throwing stones at the professor while lecturing." The sarcastic remarks of a professor now and then, and some of his uncomplimentary references to the duller of his students, may have at one time or another caused scenes which probably gave rise to the above enactment. Hence we may conclude it was meant to meet a particular case.

In Oxford there was a wholesale prohibition against "struggling, chorus-singing, dancing, leaping, shouting, and inordinate noise; pouring forth of water, beer, and all other liquids and tumultuous games, because," the enactment innocently adds, "such things were inclined to disturb the occupants of the chaplain's chamber underneath." It won't be hard to believe this, particularly when it is remembered that in those days there were no such things as ceilings to the rooms, and probably also boards were not very well put together.

At the disputations amongst the professors, feeling, as is usual in such cases, sometimes ran high. In Longfellow's very pretty drama, called the *Golden Legend*, he has put himself to picture many phases of mediaeval life. The opening of Act VI introduces us to Salerno, where we get an example of the doctors' disputes.

TOWN AND GOWN DISPUTES

Our description of University life would, undoubtedly, be incomplete without some reference to the far-famed "town and gown rows," which were so common in the Middle Ages. We have seen how the teaching guild by its great influence developed into an independent corporation. It took years to gain this independence by constitutional agitation. The great lever by which it rose was its power to boycott and strike work; but at times it did not disdain to engage in more primitive methods of warfare. We frequently find the students and professors in all the universities—Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Bologna, Salerno, etc., engaging in real hand-to-hand encounters with outsiders who in any way offended against their rights, or what they considered such. Reading through the history of Oxford, we come across

scores of such encounters between students and the townspeople, some of them of a serious nature, accompanied with the spilling of blood. A skirmish between a few students and townspeople was of frequent occurrence, and caused little stir; but in the great battles, the whole University, from the latest matriculated student to the Rector, fought solidly as one man for their *alma mater*. On the other hand, the townspeople, from the humblest burgess to the Mayor, fought for the town. When we remember that both were growing corporations in a society far less regulated by law than society to-day, we can easily understand how their rights must have often clashed. Of course, the causes of some of the rows were very trivial; but the above reason will go to account for why such small things made them fight. With this, then, we shall close our study of University life in the Middle Ages. It forms a vast and many-sided subject. Of course it is altogether impossible to give anything like an adequate picture of it in the space at our disposal. Some may be inclined, perhaps, to say that we should not have dwelt so much on the lighter, less serious, and to some of those who regard the Middle Ages as pre-eminently the ages of faith and holiness, the not always edifying side of it. Some may be inclined to say that such things take from the dignity of a great subject. To those, we can only answer that this same less serious side is also part of our study, and the fact that some of it grates on preconceived notions of this period is no reason for suppressing it.

We have been much more concerned to avoid what Newman speaks of in the introduction to the study of Saint Chrysostom, "the endemic perennial fidget which possesses us about giving scandal; facts are omitted or glosses are put upon memorable acts because they are not edifying, whereas of all scandals such omissions, such glosses are the greatest."

CONCLUSION

No one need think that the men of the Middle Ages will suffer by having the truth known about them; their faults, equally with their virtues, are instructive to us. Despite the former, the latter have made them great. Now, we sometimes read essays in which glib-tongued writers speak of the men of these times with a sense of self-superiority, which would be irritating if it were not positively ludicrous. They tell us that they were blind to the real wants of the age; their methods were unpractical; they lost time hunting after vain and useless subtleties. Such writers often finish up by inviting us to contrast the futile efforts of the schoolmen with the practical results of the days in which we live. They speak eloquently of the steam-engine and the weaving loom; of wireless telegraphy and the motor car; of radium and rontgen rays. One writer tells us, or at least did tell us, some years ago, that the aim of the age was to make man

content with the world in which he lived, and to have him cease thinking of the one about which science could tell him nothing. No doubt this argued a very practical bent. But cease your vain endeavours. "Not on bread alone doth man live" is as true to-day as when the Saviour spoke. Man will not be content with this world; he has thoughts and he has questions, which pass beyond the gate that shuts out life from death; and all that fails to give them answer fails, too, to give his spirit rest. Beware of this same scientific spirit, or rather of the men who sometimes elect themselves to be its mouthpieces. Well might Tennyson warn us some fifty years ago to be on our guard, lest it become to us, as it subsequently did to many, the "Procuress to the Lords of Hell."

Thirty years ago, when Huxley and the German Haeckel were in the ascendant, the world waited for the last words science had to say, particularly on the mystery of the beyond. What was the gist of their deliverance? That which the Persian Omar had given before them, "I myself am Heaven and Hell"; to lose no time in the mosque, the hollow echoes of our own supplications are the only answers to our voices in the Temple. Here was the message of this very superior age. But the old eternal and undying questions will recur; the world would not remain content with this "*ipse dixit*" of the scientists; it has gone back once more to study the problems of the schoolmen, to give a new solution to the riddle of the universe. This is one of the great causes of the newly awakened interest in the Middle Ages, already referred to above, and of the curiosity lately shown as to mediaeval methods and teaching. It has given rise also on this account to a very great interest in the subject of this sketch, the University life of those times.

THE END.

