

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIÆVAL MIND.*

That the mediæval mind was dominated by two great influences — that of classical antiquity, or the antique culture, and that of patristic theology — is the main theme of Mr. Taylor's great interpretative history of mediæval culture. The cultural historical manifestation of the two-fold dominance referred to is also two-fold; namely, intellectual and emotional, the thought and the feeling of the age. The aim constantly before the author throughout these two large octavos is "to follow through the Middle Ages the development of intellectual energy and the growth of emotion."

The organization and treatment of the immense mass of material illustrative of the character and tendencies of mediæval culture show a remarkable combination of scholarly objectivity with subjectivity of a high order. This, however, was only to be expected from the author of "Ancient Ideals" and "The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages." Mr. Taylor holds that the function of the historian is not merely to delve into the minutiae of the past. He must, at his peril, judge as well as narrate.

"He cannot state the facts and sit aloof, impartial between good and ill, between success and failure, progress and retrogression, the soul's health and loveliness and spiritual foulness and disease. He must love and hate, and at his peril love aright and hate what is truly hateful. And although his sympathies quiver to understand and feel as the man and woman before him, his sympathies must be controlled by wisdom."

So in regard to the Middle Ages, "we have to sympathize with their best, and understand their lives out of their lives and the conditions in which they were passed." This is not an easy task, and it calls for an extraordinary knowledge and sympathy on the part of moderns. We are

* THE MEDIÆVAL MIND. A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages. By Henry Osborn Taylor. In two volumes. New York: The Macmillan Co.

so much nearer akin to the cultural ideas and ideals of Greece and Rome than to those of mediæval Empire and Papacy that much of the finest and best in mediæval ascetic and chivalric thought and emotion is apt to escape us through lack of understanding of fundamental socio-psychic traits. A careful reading of Mr. Taylor's two volumes cannot fail to put the sympathetic student on an appreciative and understanding basis with regard to what was best and most characteristic in mediæval culture. The work is not merely informing in its wealth of illustration and citation, it is an "Open Sesame" to a thorough understanding of the forces and influences producing and developing the mediæval mind.

In working out his thesis of dual influences and dual manifestations, Mr. Taylor first describes the groundwork of mediæval thought and emotion. He shows how the west was Latinized, and how Greek philosophy was clearly the antecedent of the patristic theological apprehension of fact. That this apprehension was warped and narrowed by the growth of doctrines and dogmas of salvation, is shown in an interesting chapter on the "Intellectual Interests of the Latin Fathers," who, however, in spite of their "intellectual obliquities" developed "Catholic Christianity consisting in the union of two complements, ecclesiastical organization and the complete and consistent organism of doctrine," which in their union "were to prove unequalled in history for coherence and efficiency." Next we have a description and interpretation of the "Latin Transmitters of Antique and Patristic Thought," such as the great transitional scholar Boethius, whom Mr. Taylor rather daringly characterizes as "a professing Christian," the longeval Casiodorus with his "Christian utilitarian view of knowledge," the almost mediæval Gregory the Great in whom cultural decadence and barbarism meet and join, and, as a final type, Isidore, the princely scholar-bishop of Seville, the encyclopædist of the Middle Ages whose "Etymologiæ," in twenty books, contains "a conglomerate of knowledge, secular and sacred, exactly suited to the coming centuries." Theology, grammar, and rhetoric were dominant over reason and science by the middle of the seventh century.

In the remainder of the section devoted to the groundwork, Mr. Taylor describes the nature and effects of the barbaric disruption of the empire: how the Celtic people of Gaul and Ireland contributed a peculiar emotional romantic

strain, how Teuton qualities came from Anglo-Saxon, German, and Norseman, and how Christianity and antique knowledge were brought by Irish and Roman monks to the pagan peoples of the north. All this is well and skilfully told, and the function of the Teutons in mediæval evolution is shown to have been "to accept Christianity and learn something of the pagan antique, and then to react upon what they had received and change it to their natures."

The next section of the work takes up in detail the intellectual forces and figures of the early Middle Ages. The Carolingian period shows the first stage in the appropriation of the patristic and antique, while the beginnings of European nationalism in the eleventh century are recognized by separate chapters on the Latin cultural thought of Italy, France, Germany, and England. In closing this section, attention is drawn to the growth of mediæval emotion in connection with Latin Christianity.

The struggle to maintain the ideal and the failure of realization, thus producing the actual, in connection with both the saints and ordinary society, furnishes the basic motive for Books III. and IV. Monastic reforms, eremitism, the spiritual love of St. Bernard and St. Francis, and the mystic visions of ascetic women, illustrate the saintly ideal; while the "spotted actuality" of religious life is shown by the testimony of mediæval invective and satire, by the astounding revelations of Archbishop Rigaud's Register, and other evidences of failure to rise to the ideal. One of Mr. Taylor's greatest descriptive triumphs is the delightful chapter dealing with the thirteenth-century world of the honest garrulous Franciscan friar Salimbene. Here the actual is seen in true perspective through the "uncloistered eye" of the *naïve* ecclesiastic. In regard to the ideal and actual in society, we have feudalism and knighthood described and contrasted with romantic chivalry, courtly love, and mystical aspirations; while the mediæval woman is shown us in the person of Heloise, and the critic of society in Walther von der Vogelweide, type of German nationalism and of Teutonic opposition to what was Roman.

The topic of Mediæval Symbolism is interestingly discussed in three chapters of Book V., dealing with scriptural allegories, the interpretation of the visible world, as given by the inventive Hugo of St. Victor, and the symbolism of the cathedral, the mass, and the hymn or religious poem. A wealth of illustration is given to round out a scholarly general treatment of a difficult subject.

The next section is devoted to "Latinity and Law," and shows the origin and development of Latin culture along somewhat secular lines of prose and verse which approach the popular and vernacular. An additional chapter dealing with the mediæval appropriation of the Roman Law hardly does justice to the dynamic significance of the great legal revival of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The task of tracing the development of the mediæval mind and interpreting its productions is brought to a most successful close in Book VII., dealing with the "Ultimate Intellectual Interests of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." Scholasticism is made clear in its spirit, scope, and method, from its beginnings to its triumph in Thomas Aquinas. The great rationalist Roger Bacon is skilfully depicted, and the keen-minded controversialists Duns Scotus and Occam are given a chapter. Finally, in Dante, in whom "the elements of mediæval growth combine," Mr. Taylor finds his type for the mediæval synthesis.

"When the contents of patristic Christianity and the surviving antique culture had been conceived anew, and had been felt as well, and novel forms of sentiment evolved, at last comes Dante to possess the whole, to think it, feel it, visualize its sum, and make of it a poem."

It is easier to appreciate than to criticize such a work as Mr. Taylor's on "The Mediæval Mind." The erudition, scholarship, and understanding of developmental forces, command respect and admiration. Possibly the author has brought to his task of interpretation too set ideas of exact influences and channels of development. There will certainly be some who will feel that the vernacular aspects of mediæval culture have been slighted for the sake of the Latin. Others will criticize the absence of a certain institutional sense in relation to culture and civilization; and still others will feel that there is too much of the biographical and personal in the work. No writer can please everyone, but it may be safely prophesied that Mr. Taylor will lead many into new cultural paths. His work should be an incentive to more vital study of the past, and should serve to draw attention to the field of cultural history so much neglected in our American universities. Special courses in the history of European culture are now given at Columbia, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, and possibly at one or two other universities. They should be given in all the larger institutions.

NORMAN M. TRENHOLME.