An Essay Toward
A HISTORY OF EDUCATION
CONSIDERED CHIEFLY IN ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE WESTERN WORLD

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### CHAPTER VIII

**FROM CHARLEMAGNE TO THE RISE OF THE UNIVERSITIES**

**NINTH TO TWELFTH CENTURIES**

**Scope of chapter: How light came to the ‘Dark Ages.’** To be obsessed with the idea that education and schools are synonymous is a handicap in studying any period of the history of education; but it makes simply impossible an intelligent evaluation of education in the ‘Dark Ages.’ It is that obsession which has misled many historians to exaggerate the value of Charlemagne’s influence upon the education of the period, and even to trace a connection between his efforts on behalf of schools and the marked intellectual revival which took place in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, three or four hundred years after the death of Charlemagne. There is a manifest huge gap to be bridged between these two ages; and it is not bridged by schools.¹ This chapter will try to show how the barbarian Europe of the ninth century came to be the civilized Europe of the thirteenth century; the process is essentially one of education.

**The ‘Dark Ages’ continue after Charlemagne.** It is no injustice to Charlemagne’s fine efforts to say that they had little to do with bringing light to the ‘Dark Ages.’ If the vigorous government of Charlemagne had been maintained with equal vigor by his successors, and if these successors had shown the same wise interest in education which was one of the chief glories of Charlemagne, a scant hundred years might have put an end to the ‘Dark Ages.’ But the statement is painfully like the old saying in the army, “If

we had some ham, we could have ham and eggs, if we only had some eggs." Charlemagne's efforts on behalf of schools practically died with him. His successors were, for the most part, incompetent to further them. More than that, important as those efforts were, they were limited even in his own time. They had not a wide enough influence to affect the general state of education in Europe. The Germans were scarcely touched by them. Spain was almost wholly in the power of the Saracens. The Christian East, struggling desperately against the Moslems, was in disorder; it was only in 860, half a century after the death of Charlemagne, that Michael III was able to refund the University of Constantinople; and the restoration was not very vigorous even then. In Charlemagne's own domain, the schools he set up would have needed generations to make an impression upon the feudal anarchy of the times.

Early feudalism anarchic. We must not let the military successes and glory of Charlemagne blind us to the fact that Europe was still seething in barbarian ferment. The civilization of the Middle Ages was still in its feeble infancy. The most important organization of society was in local efforts to climb out of anarchy. Small freeholders banded together for mutual aid, their immediate aim being merely security of life and property. It was an organization primarily for war, not for the development of civilization. It was a most necessary organization; but its very necessity is a terrible revelation of the bad conditions which prevailed. Out of it some fine things were to grow; but they were not envisaged in the early organization itself. It affected but very little the wretched slavery which the various peoples of Europe had inherited from the Romans or had brought from their own vague antiquity. Feudalism of itself did nothing to improve the lot of the slaves and serfs; it merely included them in the compacts which their masters made. Later, as we shall see, it tended indirectly to give to the serf a slightly better status, by attaching him to the land. He was no longer to be a mere chattel; he had some roots in the soil. But the whole of society, despite its elaborate organization in detail, was so loosely knit together as scarcely to merit the name of a society. This exaggerated local independence was a great hindrance to the spread of any general scheme of education, such as Charlemagne had hoped and striven for. Even in 885, seventy years after the death of Charlemagne, a like attempt of Alfred in England came to practically nothing, and for precisely the same reasons.¹

The Church involved in feudalism. It is to be noted that all of Charlemagne's zeal for schools found its practical expression through the clergy and the monks. Not even the most hostile writer disputes the fact that these churchmen were in almost exclusive possession of what educational tools the age could look to. Charlemagne had no choice but to use the clergy and the monks. And it must be frankly admitted that most of them were poor instru-

¹ Cf. Finlay, Byzantine Empire, Bk. I, p. 265.
ments. One Alcuin does not make a learned and pious clergy, any more than one swallow makes a summer. The bishops and abbots had become feudal lords; no doubt, by sheer necessity. But the fact involved them, and through them the priests and monks, in the turbulent anarchy of the time, in the riot of individualism, which, sifting all elements, we find at the bottom of barbarism. For all practical purposes, each bishopric, each abbey, stood by itself; concerned chiefly, if not only, with its relations to its feudal suzerains and feudal subjects. Bishops and abbots were more interested in caring for their feudal rights than in raising the tone of civilization, either morally or intellectually.

Conditions made worse by further barbarian raids. Bar-o-nius is perhaps the first to give to the ninth and tenth centuries the name of the 'Iron Age.' It was an age marked not merely by constant feudal quarrels, but by savage and destructive inroads from the still less civilized outer world. There are three of these invasions to be specially noted. The first is the Norman raids, which occupied the greater part of the ninth century, and ended only in the shameless bribe by which Charles the Simple, in 911, turned over to the pirate Rollo the splendid Duchy of Normandy. Then, beginning in 831, the Saracens ravaged northern Italy and southern France, pushing up the valley of the Rhone. More terrible still, huge armies of Huns devastated central Europe during most of the tenth century. In 926 their savage waves had come up to the very frontiers of Lorraine; and they continued in a succession of invasions until the death of their leader Tatsong in 972.

With particularly disastrous results to clergy and monks. Such events alone would demoralize even a well-established civilization; they were incredibly injurious to the difficult beginnings of mediaeval civilization. All the elements of society suffered through the confusion and insecurity brought about by these invasions, but perhaps the clergy and the monks suffered most of all. Their material losses were great. The Norman pirate, Hastings, in 851, burned the monasteries of Fontanelles, St. Ouen, and Jumièges. Within a few years, Marmoutier was pillaged, St. Martin of Tours was burned, Malmedy, Corbie, Liége, and scores of others, were destroyed. In the course of the ninth century, the abbey of Nonantula in Italy was plundered seven times, ending with the last savage onslaught of the Huns, who in 899 killed all the monks together with their abbot, Gregory. It has been said that by the beginning of the tenth century scarcely one of the great French abbeys was left standing. Many of these monasteries had possessed considerable libraries. Fontanelles had a famous one. The chronicles of Novalesa in Italy record that when the Saracen invaders came, in 906, the fleeing monks carried away with them to Turin more than six thousand volumes. Most of these were later burned by the Saracens in the sack of Turin. Beyond a doubt the monastery libraries suffered great losses in all these raids and invasions. But more grievous to mediaeval society was the demoralization of the monks and clergy, caused by their dispersion and the inevitable breakdown of what religious discipline the rude times had been able to boast. Wars always tend to breed license.1

The darkest part of the 'Dark Ages.' Shepherds and sailors and other watchers of the night have made us believe that the darkest hours come before the dawn. Certainly, the latter part of the 'Dark Ages' grows steadily more gloomy. Rulers were incompetent; and what energies they had were almost entirely devoted to war. There

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was no cohesion in the social order, little or no intercommunication of ideas. Roads had pretty nearly ceased to exist.\(^1\) All life was narrowed to the small circle of feudal domains; and even that life was made sullen and savage by its insecurity. The Catholic Church, the one great hope of civilization in these turbulent times, found only pitifully feeble instruments to its hand, in a dispersed and demoralized huddle of monks, in its swaggering, incontinent, and ignorant bishops and priests.\(^2\) Perhaps in no part of Europe were conditions worse than in Rome itself, during most of this time torn by factions which made the papacy the sport of their ambitions.

Optimistic writers try to see an area of light amidst all this darkness, in the Germany of the Ottos. But the exception there is more apparent than real. In the tenth century, the descendants of Henry the Fowler, and notably Otto the Great, who ruled as king from 936 to 973, and was crowned emperor of the West by the Pope at Rome in 962, established a strongly autocratic government in Germany, and made a vigorous stand against the Hun invaders. But far from curbing the turbulence of the age, they added to it by engaging in the factional wars of Italy. Otto the Great appointed his brother, St. Bruno, and his cousins, Poppo and Henry, to episcopal sees. These were three good men, who tried earnestly to stir up some enthusiasm for learning and piety amongst their clergy. But the little good they did was more than offset by the vicious policy which gave them their appointment as bishops, and which led to such grave abuses in the Church. And they no more succeeded in making a home for learning in Germany, or in effecting any widespread reform in the German clergy or people, than had Charlemagne in France or Alfred in England.

**The needed revival.** What the age needed was, not a scattering of learned men, not an occasional pious bishop here and there, not even a wise sovereign who would encourage schools. If the education of men was to develop in any way befitting human beings, society needed two things. The first was a definite stabilizing, on some sound and healthy basis, suited in a practical way to what the men of the time were capable of appreciating. And the second was a moral reform, some return to Christian principles of conduct. These two processes would constitute the real education of Europe, and upon them alone could be built any further development of civilization. The instruments of these two processes were at hand; in the tradition of Roman law and the civil organization, which, though obscured, had never been wholly lost to Europe; and in the Catholic Faith, which smouldered with a divine vitality under all the ashes of violence, simony, ignorance, superstition, and immorality. But that Europe of the ninth and tenth centuries should be so revivified would seem to be a greater moral miracle than even the survival of the Church during the first three centuries of persecution.

**Brought about through Cluny.** It is no exaggeration to say that the foundation of Cluny marks the turning point in the history of education in the Middle Ages. Cluny was a Benedictine abbey, about four miles from Macon, founded in 910 by Berno, on a grant of land from William, the Duke of Aquitaine. There had been Benedictine monasteries continuously for nearly four hundred years. In their early history, as we have seen, the Benedictine monks were a most important factor in the civilizing of the barbarians. But although all the monasteries had a common 'rule,' or way of life, each monastery was an isolated unit. That fact involved them in the feudal organization which grew up round about them. Further, it exposed them to the great weakness of being unable to resist or oppose the bad conditions which might prevail in their particular locality; they

\(^1\) Cf. H. Bellov, *The Road*, New York, 1925, pp. 147 sqq.

had no common fund of spiritual vigor upon which to draw in their need. Hence they inevitably suffered decay in the social anarchy of the ninth century. Berno saw the need of closer organization, for the mutual support of the monasteries. During the seventeen years of his government of the new abbey of Cluny, he succeeded in getting five other monasteries to revive the spirit of the old Benedictine rule, and to place themselves under the central jurisdiction of Cluny. His successor, St. Odo, abbot from 927 to 942, added seventeen more abbeys to the organization. Both Odo and Malouet, who was abbot from 948 to 975, carried the new spirit into Italy, which had perhaps suffered more grievously from the distress of the times than any other country. Bishop Gennadius of Astorga, in Spain, restored a number of abbeys destroyed by the Saracens, and placed them under the rule of Cluny. And so the organization grew, until, in the twelfth century, three hundred and fourteen Benedictine houses were included in the Cluny system. It was this growing system which changed the character of feudalism, and therefore of all mediaeval society. The change was an amazing work of education. We shall have to consider it a little in detail, though as briefly as possible.

Which brought back the Roman concept of organization.

As has been said, early feudal society needed stabilizing.

1 Benedict of Aniane, who died in 821, had, with the aid and encouragement of Louis the Mild, reformed the monks of a number of Benedictine abbeys; but his work died with him. The changes he introduced into the Benedictine rule were adopted by Berno, and made the base of his new reform. They may be read in Migne, P. L., 103:701-1380.

2 A. K. Porter, Romanesque Sculpture on the Pilgrimage Roads, 10 vols., Boston, 1923, recounts in detail how the influence of Cluny spread first to Burgundy, then to England, northern Spain, the Netherlands, southern Italy; and most strikingly how it passed along the great highway which led to the shrine of St. James at Compostella.

3 Under Hugh, abbot from 1049 to 1103, the total number of Cluniac monks was reckoned at some ten thousand. At the general chapter of 1132, summoned by the abbot, Peter the Venerable, more than two hundred priors attended.

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All its elements were in flux. A great man like Charlemagne could hold them together momentarily with his strong hand; but when his grasp was relaxed, they scattered again. Yet the memory of the great Roman organization was never wholly lost, even during the wildest times of anarchy in Europe. Indeed, from the time of Charlemagne on, there were repeated efforts to revive the Roman Empire itself. For the most part the revivals were in name only. When they approached any reality, it was always by a mere forced imposition of physical power: a necessarily unstable condition. Now the reform of Cluny was modeled on the Roman idea of a central organization; but it did not impose that central government; it got men to accept it voluntarily.1 It is true, Cluny was concerned with organizing a comparatively small number of men, in the distinctive (and what some would stupidly call 'unsocial') monastic life. But those monks were an influential part of mediaeval society, and their monasteries were intricately involved in the feudal system. The drawing together of the monks could not but affect the complicated feudal world in which they lived. A new idea of union was actively at work in that world, and its value appealed to many, who had no notion whatever that it was a very old idea brought again into practice.2 It would be out of proportion, and

1 It is significant that, although Odo definitely aimed at a general reform of monasticism, and was empowered by Pope John XI in 901 (Migne, P. L., 132:1057) to receive "any monk from any monastery who should wish to pass over to your manner of living," he reformed twice as many monasteries at those which he added to the Cluny system; and although he had the backing of civil lords, he used no force, but relied upon persuasion. (See the reform of Fleury: Migne, P. L., 133:81. Vita Odonis a Joanne, 3:8.)

2 The Cluniac monasteries were placed directly under papal jurisdiction. This fact and its political consequences, in establishing an influential organization within the various feudal states which was free of control by those states, are of enormous importance in the social and political history of Europe. Whether men managed that new central political power well or ill in the preceding centuries, there is no denying that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the
beyond our purpose, to follow the development of that idea in the feudal system. Every honest history of the Middle Ages shows it. But we should not forget that it takes its beginning at Cluny.

And revived the Christian spirit. More important even than the civil reform of feudalism, was the revival of Christian principles of living; without which, indeed, the civil reform itself would have been impossible. It must not be forgotten that by the tenth century most of western Europe had accepted Christianity in theory at least; but it is always a harder task to get people to reduce a theory to practice than to get them to accept the theory. Even those who may not admit that moral and religious education is more important than intellectual education,¹ must confess that it is more difficult. Cluny set about the moral education of Europe both by example and by precept. Within fifty years of its foundation, the holy lives of its own monks had made the name of Cluny famous throughout the Western world, had impressed the imagination of peasants and nobles alike, and had begun to leaven the mass of Europe.

Immediately by its influence on the clergy and monks. The Popes John XI and Leo VII welcomed and furthered this revival. By their charters they exempted Cluny from all jurisdiction save their own. They made of the Cluniacs a rock in the swirling waters of feudalism. Bishops turned to Cluny for aid in reforming various monasteries; often to find the peaceful Cluniacs ending by reforming the bishop himself. It is impossible to reckon accurately the number of restorations and new foundations of monasteries in the tenth century, but in the lifetime of Odo alone we

papal power was the great source of social unity in Europe and a most potent influence in bringing Europe out of barbarism.

¹It is stupid, furthermore, to ignore the obvious fact that moral and religious education involves a very energetic use of the intellect in grasping and applying great truths.

have record of more than fifty in France, Italy, and the Germanies. The Christian fervor of the monks was contagious. Often, as in Upper Lorraine, laymen and the lower clergy besieged the bishops with clamors for reform; this was very notable in Toul, Verdun, and Metz. Corruptio optimi pessima: a bad bishop is harder to Christianize than a prostitute; but at times even a bad bishop gave way to popular demand, as Adalbero did at Metz in 933.² It is not implied that suddenly all the clergy and monks became saints; but unquestionably the moral and religious tone of the clergy and monks was raised, the scandal of dissolute clerical lives was lessened, the teachings of Christ were more earnestly preached to the people at large. There are three particular effects of this educational movement to be noted.

By introducing the truce of God. First, and perhaps most important, was the repression of feudal violence. In 989, at the Council of Charroux,³ was decreed the Pax Dei; by which the sentence of excommunication was uttered against all who should attack unarmed travelers, steal from a church, or steal from the poor. It was declared again at Narbonne and at Le Puy, in 990; more solemnly at Poitiers, in 999. ² Twenty like councils repeated the decree between 1000 and 1038. This was a significant stand against the anarchic violence of feudalism; and it is to be observed that it is distinctly based on religious belief and backed by religious sanction. But it was to go further. At the Council of Elna, in 1027, the ‘truce of God’ was first proposed: an agreement by which the knights bound themselves not to fight ‘from the ninth hour on Saturday to the first hour

¹Bollandists, Acta SS., 27 Febr., p. 697.
²Mansi, Concilia, Vol. 19, 89-90. It is worth remark that at this council, as also at the councils of Henry (1024) and Elna (1027) women took part. Cf. Mansi, Vol. 19, 483.
of Monday." Within fifteen years the movement had grown so that Odilo, the fifth abbot of Cluny, backed by Reginald, the Archbishop of Arles, Benedict, the Bishop of Avignon, and Nithard, the Bishop of Nice, could appeal to the clergy of Italy to receive and keep the Treva Dei, "which we have accepted and firmly hold." This developed truce of God was to extend from sunset on Wednesday to sunrise on Monday. The days of peace between Wednesday and Monday were to be kept sacred to the memory of the Christian mysteries; the motive of peace was the Christian religion. For a homicide committed on a day of the Truce, the penalty was exile from the province and pilgrimage to Jerusalem; for other offenses against the peace, reparation under the civil law, and a double canonical penance. It is astounding to know that the truce of God was accepted; even though it was not perfectly kept, its acceptance marked a great educational advance; and it was kept in sufficient measure to lift Europe out of anarchy.

By Christianizing the institution of chivalry. Chivalry at first meant only cavalry, soldiers on horseback. Later it meant the order of feudal nobility, based upon the military and social distinction of knighthood. In theory, knighthood was not hereditary. It was to be conferred as a recognition of valor and worthiness. It was to be a democratic institution, open to every one who could earn entry into it. In reality, of course, it was practically hereditary; with rare exceptions, only the sons of knights became knights. For centuries the distinction of knighthood was nothing more than a distinction of physical prowess; and if to our modern minds the very name is filled with the fine moral flavor of loyalty, devoted courage, courtesy, if today chivalrous means considerate, unselfish, and morally noble, we must recall that the change in meaning came from that Cluny which introduced the truce of God. The Chansons de Geste read back into the earlier chivalry a spirit which it did not have until the influence of the Clunian monks made Christian principles an essential part of chivalry. Without ceasing to be military, chivalry became religious. Its ceremonies of initiation were acts of worship of God. The oath of knighthood was an oath to defend religion, to practice justice and charity and mercy. The penalties for violation of the oath were religious penances. The knight was a man dedicated. It was this fusion of the martial and the religious which prepared the way for the Crusades, the epic adventures of the Middle Ages. When Pope Urban II, once a Clunian monk, proclaimed the First Crusade at Clermont, in 1095, the chief inducement he offered to the Christian knights for taking part in the Crusade was an indulgence.

And by improving the lot of the serfs. It is not within the purpose of this chapter to go into the history of serfdom. But a reform which opened the way for serfs to

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1 Mansi, Vol. 19, 485.
2 Mansi, Vol. 19, 595.
3 It may help us to realize the educational significance of the truce of God, if we compare the effort which brought it into existence with the efforts expended, since the World War of 1914-18, upon a covenant of peace: (1) in the conditions under which the two have been made (a semibarbarian feudalism, and a supposedly high civilization); (2) in the means employed (the universal Catholic religion, and congresses of diplomats); and (3) in the relative success of the two attempts.

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2 The distinctive education of a knight is well known. In its later development, it included an elementary training in letters and in art, and finally training in elaborate courtesy and such graces of life as the age knew: the whole strongly pervaded by the spirit of religion. Although it was concerned only with a small percentage of the population, its influence was considerable, because that small part of society constituted the social leaders.
3 Can. 2: Quicunque pro sola devotio, non pro honoris vel pecuniae aedepctione, ad liberandam ecclesiam Del Jerusalem prefectus fuerit, iter illud pro omnli penitentia reputetur. Mansi, Concilia, Vol. 20, 816.
develop themselves is a very important event in the history of education, and its importance is stressed by the fact that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the serfs constituted by far the largest part of the population of Europe. Old Roman laws had forbidden rural slaves to be removed from the land of their origin. The barbarians, besides adding greatly to the number of slaves, suppressed these laws. The Church revived them for her own serfs, and gradually, both by the influence of her example and by the persuasions of Cluny monks in the various regional councils, got the feudal lords to accept them. Seebohm points out that serfdom was a transitional stage between slavery and freedom. And it was the application of Christian principles to feudal society by and through Cluny which furthered that transition. Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, replying to the Apologia of St. Bernard in 1125, says: “We look upon our serfs, not as slaves and handmaids, but as brothers and sisters.” The way to freedom opened through Christian charity and the Christian sense of spiritual equality. In the twelfth century Walter Mapes could say that the villeins were educating their ignoble offspring in the liberal arts. In France and Italy serfs increasingly gained their freedom during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and serfdom had practically disappeared by the end of the fourteenth century. There were, obviously, many causes at work in this change, but a notable impetus comes from Cluny.
A restored society ready for intellectual development. It is unwise to forget that all educational development is not merely slow (and not always in a forward direction), but that it is continuous, linking a constant succession of causes and effects. A mere handful of intelligent and energetic men may speed up the process, but only when the mass of men are ready to follow their leadership. It is this fact which at times tempts the historian of education to despair; he can never catch and put upon paper adequately that most elusive yet most important element of development, the temper and spirit of the people. Now it was that temper of the age which Cluny had changed, in every part of society, from the highest nobles to the lowest of the peasants. It is perhaps significant that schools begin to multiply in the eleventh century; but it is more significant that there is a growth of interest in things of the mind. Yet it appalls one to find modern historians sneering at the fact that great part of that interest should concern itself with revealed truths. The Christian ideal was finding a home again in the family, that basis of all society. The home life of

the eighteen years he was Archbishop of Canterbury (he died in 975), St. Dunstan founded or restored more than forty abbeys, reformed large numbers of the clergy, and to some extent revived the system of parish elementary schools which had been destroyed in the Danish invasions. See also the Annales of Thetmar of Merseburg, for the Germanies, referring to the year 1000; in Pertz, Mon. Germ. Hist., Vol. S; and the life of Bernward, Bishop of Hildesheim from 992 to 1021, by his teacher Thangmar, in Migne, P.L., Vol. 140. The Chronicum Venetum of John the Deacon, in Migne, P.L., 133-871, covers the period to 1005. The only man of note who seems to have been affected by the popular fear was the boy-Emperor, Otto III, crowned in 996, poisoned in 1002 by his mistress, Stephanie, whose husband he had ordered beheaded in 997 for a conspiracy against Pope Gregory V. But Otto's age (he was only sixteen when he became emperor) may help to account for the exception.

There is pitiful irony in the fact that later on Cluny too fell into decay, through wealth and the inertia of overgrown numbers and power. Its place was taken by the new reform of Citeaux, under the great St. Bernard. But the incomparable work of Cluny in the education of western Europe was well done before Cluny itself went the way of all human institutions.

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Guibert de Nogent, appealingly described in his autobiography, was typical of an increasingly large number of homes. Family life began to take precedence over the business of war. It is a sort of symbol of the age that within little more than a long lifetime, the pirate Normans became builders, founding between 1050 and 1125 a new and admirable style of architecture. Christendom was beginning again to indulge in the luxury of thinking.

Material for intellectual revival supplied in part by Saracens. Left to itself, Europe would have revived the arts and sciences. The peoples who created Gothic architecture and sculpture, who made the glass of the marvelous windows of Saint-Denis and Chartres, who determined the diatonic scale in music, who invented the mariner's compass, and who wove the tapestries of Bayeux, were not intellectually or aesthetically helpless, to say the least. Gerbert, born about 950, who became a monk in the Benedictine abbey of St. Geraldus at Aurillac in Auvergne, might seem to sum up in his one person the learning of the time; and a study of his extant writings, and the life by his disciple Richer, make clear that that learning was not inconsiderable. The ferment of thought in Europe was vigorous. But it moved more swiftly for the help it got from a strange source, the once threatening Saracens or Moors of Spain.


3 Evidences of the intellectual awakening in Europe in the eleventh century are found also in the growth of scholarship outside the monastic and cathedral schools. For the first time in centuries lay teachers begin to appear, and soon become rather numerous. Possibly the elevation to the papacy of Gerbert, the brilliant school teacher of Rheims, stimulated the ambition of men, and pointed to the fact that books might be as useful as the sword in achieving success.
The contribution of the Saracens should not be underestimated. It consisted chiefly in reintroducing to Europe the learning of the Greeks, particularly their writings in philosophy and medicine, and in bringing to Western civilization the great gift of the Hindu numerals and some of their mathematics. But two facts should be remembered, in this connection. The first is that the new acquaintance with foreign learning would have been useless unless the peoples of Europe were actively ready to profit by it. More exposure to learning is not education (though many schools are conducted on the supposition that it is). It was what Europeans of the eleventh and twelfth centuries brought to the new learning that determined its value to them. The second fact is that, at the very time that Europe was entering upon the astonishing intellectual development of the thirteenth century, the Saracens were slipping back into stagnation and decay.


1 Von Humboldt (Cosmos, II, p. 226, note to p. 358) considers it “more than probable...that the Christians in the west were familiar with Indian numerals even earlier than the Arabs,” and bases his acceptance of the statement on the work of the mathematician Charles, Aperçu historique des méthodes ou Géométrie, 1837, pp. 464-72. The question is discussed in Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Sciences, Vol. 8 (1839), p. 75; Vol. 9 (1839), p. 449; Vol. 16 (1843), pp. 156-73, 218-46; and Vol 17 (1843), pp. 143-54.

2 Even in the latter half of the tenth century there are evidences of intellectual enthusiasm in the reformed monastic and cathedral schools. See, for instance, Richer’s Life of Gerbert, in Fors, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Vol. 3, and Richer, Hist., Lib. III, 47-53, in Migne, 138:102-5, where Gerbert is said to have taught rhetoric from the classic Latin poets, dramatists and satirists, and astronomy with the aid of globes, showing a knowledge of the sphere of the earth, the elliptical planes, and the movements of the stars. Gerbert’s pupil, Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres from 1006 to 1028, and a friend of Odilo of Cluny, founded a great school, or rather re-established an old school, at Chartres, which was deservedly famous. Cf. Les Ecoles de Chartres au Moyen Âge, by the Abbé Clerval (Memoires de la Societe archeologique d’Eure-et-Loir, Vol. 11, 1895).

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The strange history of learning amongst the Saracens. Lack of space forbids going into any study of the education of the Saracens; but it is important to our history to consider their learning. Mohammed, an illiterate man, founded his religion about 621 A.D. It was not an intellectual movement, but one of militant fanaticism; the Koran, committed to writing only after the death of Mohammed, is a jumble of disconnected sentences. The new religion spread rapidly. Before the close of the seventh century it came into contact with the cultured peoples of Syria. Some Nestorian monks had made a Syriac version of the writings of Aristotle and the neo-Platonists and some of the Greek authorities on medicine; these they again translated into Arabic. When, about 750, the Khalifate was moved to Baghdad, some of the influential Moslems favored the new learning. Harun-al-Raschid, Khalif from 786 to 809, urged the establishment of schools. His son, Al-Mamum, who ruled from 813 to 833, founded a great school, with a library and observatory, at Baghdad. A small number of Moslems developed enthusiasm for study. They borrowed a good deal in mathematics from the Hindus, including, of course, their convenient system of numerals; which we today commonly call Arabic. But the enthusiasm never spread widely. The mass of the people looked upon it with suspicion and aversion. Nevertheless it persisted for centuries, based chiefly upon two noble interests: an interest in medicine, and a desire to rationalize the fanatic vagaries of Mohammedanism. Both these pursuits reached their best development, in the East, in Avicenna (Ibn Sina) a Persian physician, who was born in 980 and died in 1037. However, the popu

1 By way of comparison, it may be pointed out that Al-Mamun’s astronomers never attained an accuracy in determining the solar year equal to the work of the Etruscans (Cf. Niebuhr, Hist. of Rome, Vol. 1, 274) or the even better work of the Mayas in America (Cf. Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères et monuments des peuples indigènes de L’Amérique, p. 123).
lar opposition to learning had been growing, and was driving the scholars out of the East into the new Khalifate of Spain. In the East the movement dwindled into the writing of silly chronicles and lascivious romances. In its new home in Spain it thrived mightily. It became the fashion for men of wealth to collect manuscripts and to act as patrons to scholars. Most of the learning was centered in the study of medicine, based upon the writings of Galen and later of Hippocrates and Aristotle. But the medical studies involved chemistry and even astrology: in the search for the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone and a control of the influence of the stars. These researches often carried keen minds into real philosophy and real discoveries in the sciences. Geber discovered nitric acid, and Rhazes sulphuric acid. Back in the time of Al-Manum, Ptolemy's geography and astronomy had been translated into Arabic as the Almagest; and in 1196 Geber had built an observatory in Seville and made real developments in astronomy. Very many of the so-called 'Arabian physicians' were not Arabs, but Jews; and it was a group of Jewish scholars who founded the famous school of medicine at Montpellier, about 1090. The Moors of Spain were proud of their scholars as physicians, but began to look askance at them when they went into the study of philosophy. The greatest of their philosophers, Avroees (Ibn Roshd) was driven into exile before his death in 1198. The Jews received him and befriended him. After his death, the orthodox opposition to philosophical study triumphed; and in fact all zeal for learning began to die out amongst the Moors of Spain, as it had already died in the East.

How the Saracen learning came into Europe. From the tenth to the close of the twelfth centuries, the peoples of western Europe had many contacts with the Saracenic learning developed in Spain. Perhaps the first to be noted is that which came through the Moorish physicians, who were welcomed throughout Europe. Although their primary concern was with medicine, many of them had picked up no small smattering of other sciences. They impressed the awakening intellects of Europe, and were able to give them, both in speech and in writing, a great deal of information. Next, there are indications, in part historical, in part legendary, that Europeans went into Moorish Spain to study. Such a seeker after knowledge was the Englishman, Aethelward of Bath, often called the greatest English scientist before Roger Bacon. He lived in the time of William Rufus, and probably went into Spain about 1090. Such were the English Robert de Tétines and the Dalmatian Herman, whom Peter of Cluny found studying astrology at Evora when he went there himself to enquire more exactly into Moslem doctrines. Peter persuaded the two to translate the Koran into Latin, in 1143. But the most important of all the media of communication between Europe and the Saracen learning were the Christian Spaniards themselves, who, in the course of the heroic reconquest of their country from the Moors, took over also the intellectual importations which the Moors had made from the Greeks and the Hindus.

The story of the *reconquista* has no place here. Unfortunately, though it is one of the great epic stories of the world, it has very little place in any modern writing of history. From the Battle of Covadonga, in 718, in which King Pelayo defeated the invading and conquering Saracens, and saved the little foothold of the Asturias, to the Battle of Las Navas de Toldeo in 1212, covers the most inspiring part of the great struggle, which in its entirety lasted nearly eight hundred years. During the reign of Alfonso VI (1065-1109), Rodrigo Diaz, Count of Vivar, the
hero whom the Spaniards call El Cid Campeador, stirred the soul of a whole people. With the capture of Toledo in 1085, the way began to open for a mastering of the Saracen learning. Christian Spain partook of the intellectual revival of all Europe, and she found at hand a considerable store of the ancient lore of the East as material to work with. Most of the men who came from various parts of Europe to profit by the Saracen learning did not actually go to Moorish teachers, but studied in Christian schools attached to monastery or cathedral. So Gerbert had studied, at the Abbey of Cusan in Catalonia, before the close of the tenth century. At the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries, the monastic and cathedral schools of Spain were flourishing; and by 1150, Raymond, the Archbishop of Toledo, had gathered a group of fifty scholars, from nearly all the countries of Europe, to make a huge translation into Latin of all the learning that the Moors had compiled.\footnote{1}

Conclusion. This whole chapter is a summary. But to compact it still more, we may say that for a hundred years after the death of Charlemagne Europe was thrust farther back into barbarism by internal conflicts and foreign invasions; that it was raised from this sad state by the renewal of the Christian spirit and the revival of Roman principles of social organization, brought about largely through the Cluniac reform; that, with the restoration of some social and moral stability, the intellectual life of Europe began to function once more; and that it providentially found a rich mental provender awaiting it in the antique learning which the Saracens had so strangely carried out of the East. The twelfth century marks the definite passing of the Dark Ages, and the coming of a new civilization, as sharply characterized as has been that of the Greeks and the Romans.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The training of a knight.
2. The place of women in the education of chivalry.
3. The educational function of the jongleurs.
4. Schools in the Cluniac monasteries.
5. Gerbert and his disciples.
6. The schools of Rheims and Chartres.
7. The libraries of this period.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE


On the education of chivalry, see J. Batty, The Spirit and Influence
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Lyons, 1898. Although St. Gall is earlier than this period, the introduction to Maud Joynt’s Life of St. Gall, London, 1927, offers valuable data. For Italy, see G. Salvioni, L’Istruzione Pubblica in Italia nei Secoli VIII, IX, X, Florence, 1898. Concerning the year 1000, besides the reference mentioned in the text, see J. Roy, L’An Mille: Formation de la Legende de l’An Mille, Etat de la France de l’An 950 a l’An 1050 (bibliography), Paris, 1885.


