

mingled so as to make a compound absolutely strange to us. However, a little thought will reveal the solution of this seeming riddle. The fact is, we have never had a true picture of medievalism, and neither have we ever enjoyed the benefits of modern civilisation in their purity. There have been two schools of medieval fiction. One of them, that of Scott, painted the beauty of middle-age chivalry in such glowing colors as to draw the eyes of the world upon old Europe. But of the spirit which inspired these outward manifestations Scott and his followers had not a conception. The later school of novelists have attempted, without the noble mind of Walter Scott, to portray the Middle Ages, and they have succeeded only in portraying their own sympathy with the innate barbarism of those ancestors of ours whose process of civilisation had so recently begun. Neither of these interpreters has caught the spirit of the times: they have succeeded only in depicting different aspects of the body, and as yet we have had no Catholic novelist to give us the spirit as well as the matter of medievalism. Hence we have no reliable standard with which to compare Benson's picture of a new Catholic civilisation. For medievalism is in its essence nothing but the unrestricted influence of the Church upon mankind, and Benson's thesis is that if that influence produced such good results at a time when mankind was still half barbarian, its results upon the present-day world would be little short of marvellous. The Church, exerting all her powers, was thwarted in olden times by the immaturity of man. Then came the Renaissance, referred to by Benson as 'the enormous development of various sciences, and the wide spread of popular knowledge' which 'distracted attention from that which is now, in all civilised countries, simply an axiom of thought, viz., that a Revelation of God must be embodied in a living authority safeguarded by God.' After being led away by this 'first flush' of knowledge, mankind has gone back to the ancient fountains of truth; and the result is naturally a civilisation far beyond anything the world has ever seen; but also a

civilisation absolutely strange to us, because we have had no experience either in real life or in literature, of a society built up on the foundation of Catholicism.

Again, modern civilisation is for us inextricably connected with indifferentism in religious matters. The apparent conflict between science and faith is an aspect of the present day which Benson emphasises, only to further accentuate their lasting peace in the days which are to come. But to us this identification of the man of advanced science with the man of perfect faith is something very like the phenomenon of the lion which lies down with the lamb.

It is a most artistic touch in the book that after we have been startled and confused by our inability to realise and enjoy this modern medievalism, we should be taken with Monsignor Masterman to visit the Socialist colony in Massachusetts. Boston has become a refuge for 'minds which were behind the age—those solitary individuals or groups here and there who still clung pathetically to the old dreams of the beginning of the century—to the phantom of independent thought and the intoxicating nightmare of democratic government.' At first, this agnostic and materialist colony strikes us with an overpowering sense of familiarity. These men, with their talk of crops, and other earthly matters, are the men we know, the men we have lived with, and at first there is almost a guilty pleasure in getting away from the new and strange atmosphere of practical Catholicism to this familiar environment. But almost imperceptibly Monsignor, and we with him, begins to realise the deficiencies of this too-familiar atmosphere, and the dreariness of it, in comparison with that 'place of large horizons' which is our rightful heritage.

To outsiders, the most interesting part of the book is probably Benson's *apologia* for the Church in the provinces of Psychology, Comparative Religion, the Philosophy of Evidence, Pragmatism, Art, and Politics; but they can scarcely appreciate to the full measure those descriptive passages which few Catholics can read with unquickened pulses. Lourdes, the 'City

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