

Rome: The Mother of States

A Review of Del Mar's "Middle Ages Revisited."

The Middle Ages Revisited; or the Roman Government and Religion from Augustus to the Fall of Constantinople. By Alex. Del Mar; 8vo., pp. 400. The Cambridge Encyclopedia Publishing Co., 240 West Twenty-Third St., New York. Net, \$3.

The author of this work, formerly a bureau officer of the United States treasury, delegate to Russia, etc., is rapidly rising into public esteem as an historical writer. His preparation for this difficult eminence was a ripe scholarship and 15 years of close study in the British Museum and Bibliothèque Nationale, during which time he issued several monographs on classical literature, Roman history, archaeology, ancient manuscripts and coins; all of which obtained immediate recognition in England and France as works of the latest and most complete research. His first appearance as an historian of that theme of themes, the Roman Empire, was in "Ancient Britain in the Light of Modern Archaeological Discoveries," of which work the British critical press said: "This is a boundless store of information neglected by ourselves and garnered by a scholarly American. He reconstructs Roman Britain, a country full of busy cities, seaports and industrial centers, connected by fine highways, of majestic temples and villas, and of splendidly organized commerce." His second work in the same role is the one before us, "The Middle Ages Revisited." We defer our opinion of this work until after some review of its contents; a task which, owing to its immense scope, its brevity of style and the grandeur of the theme, is sufficient to tax all the resources of condensation. Perhaps this may best be accomplished by placing ourselves as it were somewhat in the attitude of the author.

In describing the Roman government and religion and their relation to the states of the modern world it will scarcely fail to appear that the constitution of the empire, the Christianization of its institutes and the position of the medieval empire and the provinces, until the latter become independent kingdoms, is the key to all modern history; that it has its practical importance and conveys its lessons for the future. In weighing the evidences which throw light upon these subjects, the author is compelled to trace the ancient systems of mythology and religion. It is evident that he would gladly have avoided a subject of so much contention; but this was found impracticable. Society is to some extent the product of religious belief. To appreciate the spirit of the laws under which we live and must act, it becomes necessary to follow the evolution of religious systems. Says the author: "We have entered the arcana of the Sacred College, not to profane its mysteries, but to fill our pitchers at its holy fount."

When civil strife had so much exhausted the Romans that they were unable to prevent the overthrow of their republican institutes, or resist the erection of a pagan hierarchy, they accepted from their tyrants a form of religion so impious and degrading as to speedily disgust the better classes of citizens and turn them against a government in whose support they had formerly taken an active and prominent part. "Caesar claims to be a god," cried Cicero. "He has his temples, steeples, priests and choristers," and the orator sealed his indignation with his blood. This feeling found popular echo in distant provinces like Judea and Britain, where it occasioned those frequent insurrections which distinguished the first century of our era. The religion which fomented these insurrections was the worship of Caesar as the Supreme Being. Though it led to Caesar's assassination by a party of Roman patricians, he was supplanted by Augustus, who, after his conquest of the Roman world, adopted precisely the same impious pretensions. Were not Ptolemy, Antonius, Sextus Pompeius, Delotaurus and many other sovereigns, who were destroyed by Augustus, worshipped by their subjects as gods; and could Augustus be less of a god who had subdued them all, who had extended the Roman empire from Gades to India and from Britain to the extremities of the known world? In the reign of Trajan, the careful Tacitus could afford to write: "The reverence due to the (ancient) gods was no longer exclusive, Augustus claimed equal worship. Temples were consecrated and images erected to him; a mortal man was worshipped; and priests and pontiffs were appointed to pay him impious homage." But there was a dread

interval of nearly a century when to have written as much would have cost the historian his life, subjected his relatives to banishment and confiscated his and their patrimonies.

Our author shows upon a body of evidence drawn largely from contemporaneous inscriptions, coins and customs, that it was upon this pivot, the worship of the Caesars, that turned the history of Rome for centuries; because even after the impious belief was rejected by the educated classes, it was cherished by the vulgar. Yet only the faintest allusions to it will be found in our standard works of reference. In Mr. Del Mar's work it is brought into relief. It is then perceived that the true grandeur of Christianity and the moral lessons of its conquest over paganism have been hidden from the light by a false history of the Roman religion and its development. "No greater struggle was ever fought and none so belittled by petty conceits and fables. Not only this, but if the edifice by which the aims of civilization are supported, continues to be poised upon the flimsy foundations which the medieval monks constructed, it is exposed to the risk of being injured by the attacks which modern criticism and satire may make upon these childish and vulnerable elements."

Passing from the religion to the civil institutes of the Roman empire, the author challenges the accepted origin and spirit of the feudal system. The views of Robertson, Hallam, Guizot, Buckle, Bishop Stubbs and others, are examined with a justice and acumen that belong to the highest order of historical criticism. Their attribution of feudalism to a barbarian origin, their fixing it upon the basis of military service, their treatment of beneficium and commendatio, are scattered into thin air. Feudal systems have been found in India, Japan, Egypt, and Mexico, countries which had nothing in common with the institutions of medieval Europe, except their hierarchical governments. Feudalism is even to be discerned in the early days of the Roman empire, in the charters of Julius and Augustus, in the laws of Diocletian and Justinian, in the land tenures and customs whose roots were buried in the Sacred College of paganism. We will not divert our author of the interest with which he has invested this problem by anticipating its solution. We recommend its treatment as the best specimen of historical writing which has appeared since the publication of Gibbon's immortal work.

The institutes of the Roman empire; the rise of Christianity; the Christianization of these institutes; the rise of the medieval empire; the lost treaty of Seltz (between Charlemagne and Nicephorus, defining their respective boundaries, powers and prerogatives); the constitution of the medieval (German) empire; the fall of the Roman (Byzantine) empire in 1204; the Guelph and Ghibelline wars; and the legal and actual position of the Roman provinces during these changes, are told with a force of diction, an elegance of style and a wealth of illustration, which leaves nothing to be desired by the reader. The work is a revelation. It proves that the archaeological finds of the past half century have placed at our command a store of learning which only needs scholarship, mental digestion and charm of style to render it of absorbing interest and practical value to the reading world. These are the materials which our author brings to his great task. The scaffolding of the work is hid from sight; one sees only the perfected edifice, in which there are no awkward joints, no evidences of patching, no tiresome digressions, no second-hand evidences, no unnecessary foot-notes. A perfect grasp and critical sifting of original evidences; a ripe judgment in the selection and arrangement of materials; a modest, but complete, mastery of his subject; thorough assimilation of its elements; and a practiced hand in wielding the pen. Such are the impressions which the work conveys; a work which we venture to say must place its author upon a very high literary pedestal.

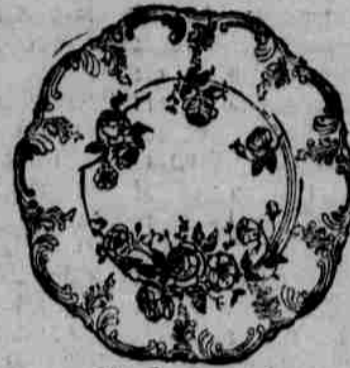
There is but one fault we have to find with it. Its title, in full, is "The Middle Ages Revisited or the Roman Government and Religion and their Relation to Britain," and we are bound to say the work is faithful to the title. But why only Britain? Why not "And their Relations to Modern States?" The author shows very conclusively that Britain, long after the time, when, according to received history, it was an independent monarchy, was in fact merely a province of the hierarchy, governed variously at Treves, Aix la Chapelle, or Rome, according as medieval emperor or pope

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maintained the paramountship of the slowly dying empire of Caesar. This position was as true of France as of Berlin. Why not then have embraced France in those chapters on the "Earliest exercise of certain regalian rights," "The Birth of the Independent Monarchy," etc., which close this memorable volume? Mr. Del Mar's earlier works have been translated into French, and have a wide reading in France. Has he not, in this instance, unwittingly cut himself off from a friendly market?

Our public libraries will peculiarly appreciate Mr. Del Mar's work. It is printed in bold type (old style, ten-point, leaded, with eight point notes), on clear stout paper and copiously indexed. One of its chief features for the librarian is the bibliography, which takes up 14 pages of eight-point type and includes a number of rare works, of which only a student in the great libraries of Europe would be likely to have any knowledge. To such works, the author attaches a brief descriptive notice, which will be useful to book collectors not having access to the originals; and to all of them he appends the shelf number of the British museum library; in order to save the student the trouble of searching its immense catalogue, in itself a library, we believe, of several thousand volumes.—Boston Public Library Bulletin, July, 1901.

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Nebraska's heavenly twins have had their noses put out of joint. It's triplets now—Dietrich, Millard and Weston.

There were only twenty football players killed during the season that ended last Thursday. The number seriously maimed has not been reported.

The grand jury got Senator Dietrich and the sheriff got Auditor Weston, and the question is, What will Nebraska do for officers if this thing goes on much longer?

The republican United States senator and the republican state auditor are both in the hands of the sheriffs. The "redeemers" are having a hard time of it.

Railroad freights are to be largely increased in the southern states by means of new classifications. The managers give as a reason for this

increase that those states have greatly increased taxation of the roads and that is the only way the roads have of getting the money to pay the increase in taxes. That is the way the roads have generally raised the money to pay increased taxes, but this is the first time that they have frankly acknowledged it.

The receivers have been discharged and Dowie is again in charge of Zion and all its industries. From what occurred in court it appears that the forcing of Dowie into involuntary bankruptcy was all spite work and malice. He is, and has been all the time, perfectly solvent. No matter what Dowie's freaks may be, before the law he should be treated the same as all other men.

The citizens of Hyde Park, which is part of Chicago, held a monster mass meeting and adopted a resolution making a vigorous protest against sensational newspaper accounts of crimes and of the prison life and of the trials and hangings of criminals.

The Standard Oil trust was proven guilty of bribery at Peoria last Tuesday. Its agents bribed clerks in an independent company to furnish information. Let the young men hasten with their subscriptions to the Rockefeller temple so that it can always stand as an incentive to form trusts, get rebates from railroads and induce young people to become bribe-takers.

The Chicago dailies, and they are no worse than those of New York, have so demoralized the whole population that the only amusement of the children is to play that they are bandits in a cave, or detectives getting shot. Such publications should be banished from every American home.

Some of the New York papers have got up enough courage to remark that "Platt is suspected of a Tammany leaning in municipal affairs." The Independent was the only paper in the United States to tell the truth about the matter in the first place. If Odell succeeds in unhorsing the "easy boss" then the New York papers will come out and tell the whole truth about the defeat of Low, otherwise they will not. There are several hundred voters in New York who rely upon The Independent for their news instead of the dailies in their great city.

Sensible Socialist

Editor Independent: Enclosed find postoffice order for \$2. While I am a socialist I enjoy reading The Independent very much and wish you all the success possible. GEO. A. LITTLE, Manchester, N. H.