

pendence of character. Here were the sentiments and opinions of all mingled and discussed. And the time came when this understanding, impelled by the necessity of a revolution, caused men once more to recognize the necessity of law and order.

After liberty and intellectual freedom had been snatched from the frail captive by Roman tyrants, men were again compelled to live a second childhood; and this was consummated in the feudal ages. With minds new and knowledge limited, men were controlled by the slightest influence or enticed by the least attraction. If that freedom of thought and action was for a time smothered, it had its reaction in turn, and has fixed a star in the firmament of illustrious events that will guide us for many centuries.

Chivalry has had its day and in its time, exercised its power. Though rude in its exterior, far within its center were safely protected and nourished, the germs of liberty. The emancipation of the body and its soul was the greatness of its work while the incentive that it has added to modern industry points out to us, the lessons that were taught under its rude tutorage.

AGETRO.

SYMPOSIUM.

What is the Influence of Skeptical Literature?

I

There is a great difference in the nature of men; some are very skeptical, and others are equally credulous.

Perhaps, on the whole, men are much more inclined to disbelieve the truth of any new statement or doctrine, whether it pertain to religion or philosophy, than they are to receive it. In past ages the so-called skeptic has been the recipient of many a harsh word and bitter denunciation. A man like Hume or Gibbon was looked upon by the great majority of men, as one of the greatest foes of human soci-

ety. And while, perhaps, many of their views were not the best, yet it is true that they set other men to thinking, and thus were the instruments by which great good was accomplished.

The credulous and the skeptical have each a duty to perform to society. The credulous accept every newly advanced opinion on every subject, and thus give it a following; the skeptic doubts, examines, questions, and, without the strongest proof, denies. Thus these two classes hold each other in check, and keep society in a well balanced condition. In past ages, and also to a certain degree at the present, those who were the most bitter persecutors of religious skeptics were themselves impregnated with skepticism to fully as great a degree. For witness, the persecutions of Harvey, Galileo and others, by the same class that at a later date, cried down Voltaire and kindred spirits.

Thus we find that we have the religious and the philosophical skeptic; each placed, as it were, at the entrance of their respective fields of inquiry, to prevent the entrance of false or erroneous beliefs.

W.

II

The influence of skeptical literature, since at the present bay it is being scattered over our land, is worthy of notice. Ever since the Star of Bethlehem shone upon the plains of Judea, and the purifying influences of a Saviour began to manifest in the deeds of men, there have been those who would destroy this influence, or attribute it to another source.

Man is by nature a religious being. He looks around and above himself for something to which he can cling as a support. He is a being, which external circumstances have the power, to a great extent, to mould. And that which especially leaves its stamp upon his character is his reading. Since this is the case, it is very desirable that his reading should be of such a nature as to leave the im-