

Dark Ages may fairly be taken as related to those that now crown so many Tibetan peaks with high-walled monasteries. The contrast between the European situation during the centuries when monachism flourished, and the situation now, in Europe and America, when it does not flourish, may give suggestion as to what are the special conditions tending to develop an institution which is no longer prospering in our world.

The most general and striking contrast between the old and the new, in our Western civilisation, is perhaps this,—a far wider present extension of settled peace, a far greater development of physical comfort, a far wider field for the fruitful application of a man's labour to the piling up of treasure in this world where moth and rust do corrupt. It seems universally true that no inhibition in accepted creed can effectively work to keep large numbers of men from the pursuit of wealth, if that pursuit be reasonably safe and reasonably productive. Vows of poverty are taken by multitudes only when it is difficult to escape poverty—*willy nilly*. Moreover, poverty is a relative term, and certainly the self-denial to which monks are pledged often enough became a comfort greater than that enjoyed by the average poor peasant in the brave and hungry days of old. Communal labour added its store to the gifts of a superstitious people, eager to buy celestial favour through a purchased intercession measured to the price. Relative also is obedience. Not more exacting is the abbot, bound by the rule, than the temporal lord who in feudal day owned the homage of his followers as well as the land on which they