

of lay power. But here nature seems to have made permanent those conditions which favour monastic development. Nor can it be doubted that in spite of some moral decay (less, it would seem, than in the shameful eras of European orders) there is a certain civilising, conserving influence exerted by bodies of men whose theoretical rule of life is one of simplicity and charity, and who keep alive the flame of learning among rude peoples. True, theirs is the puerile learning which was so dear to the Christian mind for centuries—so satisfying until this world began to be made agreeably interesting. And some may charge the monks with delaying progress toward that betterment of physical condition which will alleviate the misery and eventually lessen the ignorance of the people.

In an existence like ours, made up of inextricably crossed cause and effect, we can see but a few sequences at a time. We do not *know* that an irruption of the Gauls, an establishment of the feudal system, or an enraged Reformation, have been followed by more, or less, of evil than would have resulted from some supposed alternative course. We only know that they existed; that we may discover, in close connection with them, certain elements of pain, certain elements of pleasure; and that we are blindly driven on to do and to undo. We may be fairly secure in this, that the violent destruction of any long-established institution by a force exterior to the society which has produced such institution, must generally be *immediately* followed by evil in much greater proportion than good. The distant future, perhaps, will balance the account; yet