

ing chapters, which, though they reveal nothing new on the subject, throw needed light on other topics. The theoretical rules of conduct remained about the same for long periods, but every generation placed its own interpretation upon them. The author takes pains to refute the notion that monasteries were hotbeds of idolatry and superstition by saying that the ceremonials complained of by their critics were adopted by an earlier age for the very purpose of preserving the faith, and had that effect at the time. As educational centres convents retrograded as the occupations of the nuns became more exclusively devotional.

The decline and fall of mediæval monasticism is presented in chapters on the reforms attempted before the Reformation and on the dissolution in England. Visitations of nunneries do not begin with Henry VIII., for a critical attitude was apparent in the fourteenth century. The independence of monasteries was long fought by the bishops and was finally overruled. Evident evils were in process of correction before the violent interference of the Reformation. The author agrees with Gasquet that the dissolution in England was harshly and cruelly carried out, but does not accept the suggestion that the monastic property could have been successfully taken over by the reforming party and adapted to new uses, although in many cases this was done in Germany by converting the convent into a school or home for indigent women.

A picturesque *dénouement* is given to the book in a sketch of the Abbess Charitas Pirckheimer, sister of the humanist of the same name. She was not only an enlightened woman but of such vigorous character that she was able to keep at bay till the end the reforming party of Nuremberg. She was one of the last great "women under monasticism."

The book is a careful piece of historical work. It enters a field which has been much studied and brings forth no new results, but there is evidence of close contact with original sources, though one may differ here and there with conclusions drawn. The treatment is scientific as over against the legends of Mrs. Jameson, and cool as compared with the emotional periods of Montalembert. When woman is separated from the other religious life of the time the picture is incomplete, but the author has successfully depicted a series of characters who deserve remembrance.

J. M. VINCENT.

*Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk.* Door P. J. BLOK.  
(Groningen: J. B. Wolters. 1892-1896. Three vols., pp.  
384, 580, 548.)

A FULL history of the Dutch people by a native master of materials and methods has long been a desideratum. To the matter supplied by the old annalists and folio-makers, vast stores have been added by scholars in various countries who have delved in the archives long since opened by the governments of Europe. Professor P. J. Blok, successor to the veteran Dr. R. Fruin, who was his teacher, in the chair of history at the University of

Leyden, has essayed the congenial task, and three volumes of his work, bringing the narrative down to the Great Truce of 1609, are before us. Dr. Blok divides Netherlandish history into seven eras: I. From the most ancient time to the full development of the feudal states in the fourteenth century; II. The Burgundian era; III. The eighty-years' war, ending in 1648; IV. The Republic, which fell in 1795; V. The French domination until 1815; VI. The Kingdom of the United Netherlands; VII. A history of Netherlands after the separation from Belgium.

As preparation for his grand work, he has spent much time among the archives of various countries and especially in those of his own. Besides monographs and sketches he has published two books, "*Eene Hollandsche Stad in de Middeleeuwen*," "*Eene Hollandsche Stad onder de Bourgondisch-Oosterrijksche Heerschappij*," illuminating the story of Leyden, and "*Lodewijk van Nassau*," brother of the Silent One. He has been tutor of Queen Wilhelmina and is a prominent figure at great historical anniversaries in the Netherlands. Being but forty-two years of age and in excellent health, there is hope that he may complete the work as planned.

The volumes are handsomely printed and bound, with an appropriate map and index in each, the first two volumes having an appendix on authorities and sources of information. The essay in Vol. I. is of great interest as showing how history was written in the cloisters. Dr. Blok is generous in his references to authorities, though foot-notes proper are few and brief. His thorough familiarity with modern historical literature enables one who wishes to do so to construct from his references a bibliography of the latest and best critical writing concerning Netherlandish history. Every page shows him at home also with the standard Dutch historians, Bor, Hooft, Van Meteren, Wagenaar, Fruin, etc. While keenly appreciating Motley and realizing how effectually our countryman stirred up the Dutch scholars to noble industry, Dr. Blok regards him as a colorist in words, a dramatist and partisan, rather than a thoroughly trustworthy writer. Indeed, in one place he intimates that into the penetralia of Dutch politics Motley did not enter, thus confirming the judgment so often given by private Dutchmen in conversation that Motley depended too much upon foreigners for his knowledge of the springs of Dutch thought and action. Dr. Blok is far from being a mere annalist. He takes for granted an ordinary knowledge of the subject among his readers and avoids needless details, except as these are absolutely necessary. His plan, finely carried out in Vols. I. and II., — we are not so sure of it in Vol. III., — is to picture life, custom, thought, dress, manners, ideas, business, and markets as well as war and politics. His style is graphic and often reaches the point of fascination. It combines the dignity of stately narration with the charm of colloquial confidence.

In Vol. I., Book 1, the author treats of the primitive dwellers during the night of unlettered Netherlands, before Cæsar, the Stanley of antiquity, found a path through the regions bordering the North Sea and let fall the light of written description upon them. How the Romans and the men,

both of the vile and the good soil, in this delta land dwelt together, is pictured with skill and rhetorical power. Book 2 reveals to us the Frankish era. Then, Franks, Saxons, and Frisians traded, fought, and struggled together, making the stock of mediæval and modern Dutchmen. Then, Charles the Great and his successors erected on the ruins of Roman authority a government which itself in turn aged, weakened, fell, and made way for feudalism. The iridescence of myth, poetry, and fairy lore, which rises on the surface of the stream of narration, shows incidentally how rich is the common inheritance of the speakers of Dutch and English. In Book 3, when he takes us amid the little feudal states, Dr. Blok is thoroughly and happily at home, leading us easily through the maze. To Motley, this period seems as early England did to Milton,—a time of kites and crows,—but under Blok, the Dutch J. R. Green, we see in the feudal strifes of Holland, Friesland, Brabant, Limburg, and Flanders the exact conditions under which the later city-republics and larger states arose. Many brilliant passages are found in his descriptions of the crusades, of the reclamation and peopling of this naturally barren country, and of the estates spiritual, noble, and imperial. In Vol. II. we study the era of the Artevelde, and the centre of interest is in Flanders and the southern Netherlands. Book 5, which treats of the Burgundian era, sparkles with the splendors of feudalism at its best estate. Here, not only trade and commerce, rustic and urban life, cloister and church, castle and tourney, but also art, letters, and law have an exact and appreciative chronicler.

We think it a fair criticism to make that Vol. III. rather falls behind the other two in brilliancy of graphic narration, for it is almost wholly political in subject while more severely serious in cast. It may be, however, that in the next volume the author's idea of furnishing a history of the Dutch *people* will be more closely adhered to. He is doubtless fully justified in first of all narrating the events leading to and falling within the first half of the war, and leaving for another volume the story of life in city and country and of the wonderful growth of wealth and luxury in Holland even during a struggle for existence. To the reader of Dutch that which seems at first sight a defect is made up in Fruin's masterpiece "*Tien Jaren uit den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog*" (1588-1598), of which we have the fourth edition in 1889 and to which Dr. Blok often refers. In this Vol. III., with notable increase of dramatic power the author sets before us the determined men who stood in the forefront of the death struggle between arbitrary authority as represented by Spain, and freedom under law as embodied in brave little Holland. His limning of Philip, Alva, Requesens, and Parma on the one hand, and William, Maurice, and Oldenbarnevelt on the other, is most masterly. We have "speaking portraits." We are free to say that in judicial calmness, poise, and conviction, with fairness to both sides, the Dutch excels the American narrator. With a grasp upon the latest critical Spanish literature which explains both the economic and social as well as the political condition of Spain during the mighty struggle, the author reveals the secret of the weakness and decay of the great peninsular power.

Holland's increasing strength, which surprised contemporary spectators and later students, and the causes of it, are better known. "The days of Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt" is the prelude to one of the most terrific political duels in modern history. The "minute details" concerning the alliances of England and France, Leicester, whose character is a puzzle, and the splendid conquests of navigation, are probably not too voluminous. Literary proportions are carefully studied and comparatively little is said of battles and campaigns. Good use has been made of the rather abundant writings of the English captains who served in the Low Countries. Throughout Dr. Blok combines happily, we think, the functions of a cool critic and impartial judge with those of an interesting story-teller. We shall look for future volumes with interest.

WM. ELLIOT GRIFFIS.

*Select Cases from the Coroners' Rolls*, A.D. 1265-1413, with a brief Account of the History of the Office of Coroner. Edited for the Selden Society, by CHARLES GROSS, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Harvard University. (London: Bernard Quaritch. 1896. Pp. xlv, dbl. pp. 159.)

FOR the student of English institutional history none of the eight preceding volumes published by the Selden Society is perhaps so valuable as Professor Gross's *Coroners' Rolls*. In a narrower field he has here accomplished what he did for scholarship in his epoch-making book on the *Merchant Gild*. It is hardly too much to say that he has fairly rescued the office of mediæval coroner from the obscurity in which even the ablest of our constitutional writers have left it. For the first time we are able to see somewhat clearly how really important was the office of the elective magistrate as compared with that of the king's sheriff, by which hitherto it has been quite overshadowed.

The historical account is a fine piece of special research. The leading writers, including Mr. Maitland and Bishop Stubbs, have sought the origin of the coroner's office in the articles of the eyre of 1194, requiring that in every county three knights and a clerk shall be chosen as *custodes* or keepers of the crown pleas. But Dr. Gross finds in the municipal charters, Pipe Rolls, Curia Regis Rolls, and other documents, evidence which seems to show that both borough and county coroner existed before this date, at any rate as early as the reign of Henry I. The office was thus developed side by side with that of the itinerant justices, both becoming "firmly established under Henry II." These early coroners not only kept but also held pleas of the crown; and it is strongly argued against Professor Maitland that they continued to exercise both functions until 1215, when by c. 24 of the Great Charter the coroner, like "other bailiffs," was forbidden to hold *placita coronæ*. Even later than 1215, he could "pass judgment on felons caught in the act," and conduct "jury trials in ordinary civil pleas, either taking the place of the sheriff or, more commonly, associated with him."