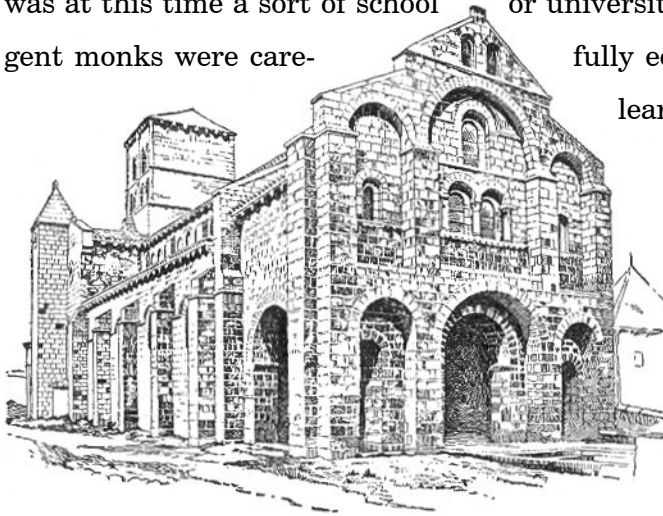


LX . THE WEALTH OF THE CLERGY .

NOT only were the last years of Hugh Capet's reign in France, and all of Robert's and Heinrich's, overshadowed by fears that the world would soon come to an end, but the beginning of Henry I's reign was also troubled in the same way, as it was now about one thousand years since the Passion of our Lord. Once more the fields were left untilled, in daily expectation of immediate judgment, and for about three years, from Greece to England, little work was done. Consequently, people suffered greatly from famine and plague. While the rich could draw upon reserve resources, the poor suffered so intensely that some actually turned cannibals, while others ate roots, grass, and even lumps of clay.

The time having passed again without bringing about the expected change, people finally took courage once more, and began again to plant and sow. With work, plenty was restored, but many of the French were very much poorer, for, while dreading the coming judgment, they had given away all they owned to the Church, which could now boast of being far richer than the king or any of his nobles.

Not only was much of the land and wealth thus held by the clergy, but most of the knowledge—and hence most of the power—centered with them also. Each monastery was at this time a sort of school or university, where a number of the most intelligent monks were care-



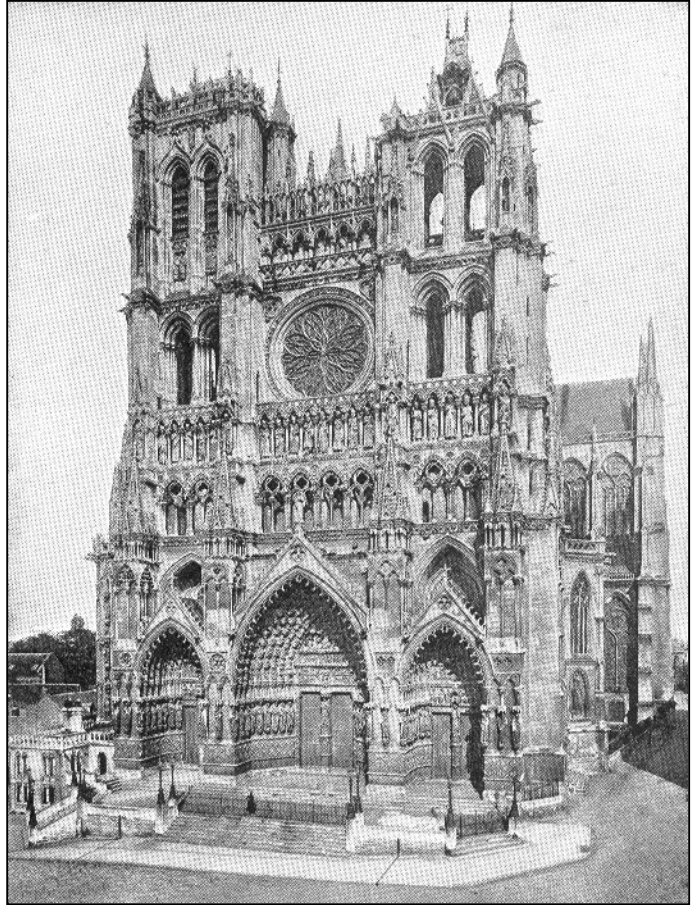
Romanesque Church of Châtel-Montagne in France.

fully educated to be teachers, preachers, and learned men of the day. Such men as were capable of receiving the necessary instruction were trained to be scribes, and in each monastery a scribarium was set aside, where, day after day, monks painstakingly copied the books they owned, or such as they could borrow. Thus in a few years each monastery collected a little library of its own, and, however

small, these collections of manuscripts were justly considered precious, for in those days a single book was often worth more than a whole farm.

It was at this time also that a beginning was made in building many great cathedrals. The monks invested part of their wealth in erecting beautiful churches, which they adorned with statues, paintings, and exquisite stained-glass windows, often the work of some of their number. Many great churches took several hundred years to finish, and some of them show, in different parts, varying styles of architecture. The heavy Roman style, with round arches, came first, and was followed by the Gothic style, with pointed arches.

Throughout the thirty years' reign of King Henry I, he had many troubles with his barons, who had become so accustomed to do as they pleased that they were continually at war with one another. Whenever the barons fought, their vassals were either obliged to follow them, or to take refuge within the castle walls and leave their fields untilled. But the



Gothic Cathedral of Amiens in France.

many little wars waged in all parts of France at this epoch so sorely hindered the cultivation of the soil that food became very scarce.

No less than twoscore famines having occurred in about fifty years, the priests, wishing to put an end to the trouble, suggested an arrangement whereby no fighting should be allowed throughout Lent or Advent, or any feast day, or from Wednesday evening to Monday morning of any week.

This was called the Truce of God, and the barons having agreed to keep it, it was decided that any man who failed to respect it should be fined or banished. As only eighty fighting days a year were left by this arrangement, the peasants were able to make use of the remainder to cultivate the fields without dread of being either killed or captured.