

should be discharged, lest his good name should suffer. And therefore it may be that all these kings and princes, knights, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, all ages and conditions, are inspired by God to come in such troops and take so many vows on them to grant pensions and annuities.¹

There is no occasion to pursue into further details the history of this extraordinary alliance between religion and lying, which forced on Europe the most extravagant sacerdotalism by evidence as extravagant as itself. By an appropriate affinity the claims of the Church to spiritual supremacy were made to rest on falsehood, whether unconscious or deliberate, and when the falsehood ceased to be creditable the system which was based upon it collapsed. Thus all illusions work at last their own retribution. Ecclesiastical miracles are not worked in vindication of purity of life or piety of character. They do not intrude themselves into a presence to which they can lend no increase of beauty and furnish no additional authority. They are the spurious offspring of the passion of theologians for their own most extravagant assumptions. They are believed, they become the material of an idolatry, till

¹ *Materials*, vol. i. p. 327.