

CHAPTER XII

MONKS AND FRIARS

THE spirit of the Middle Ages is revealed partly in the lives of the characteristic men of the time, and partly in the story of the great movements and institutions to which it gave birth.

We have traced the rise of the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, of Feudalism and Chivalry, and of the Crusading movement. It is now time to turn to the story of the monks and friars.

Monasticism had its origin in Egypt and the East, where men went into the desert to live an ascetic hermit life in the hope of enjoying unbroken communion with God. Gradually the isolated hermits drew together and grouped their cells or huts round a common chapel, choosing some one of their number to exercise a certain authority over the rest. Next they began to occupy separate cells in a common building. The monk (Greek, *monachos*, from *monos*, alone), or hermit, had become a cenobite, or member of a community.

ORIGIN
OF MON-
ASTICISM

Monasticism was introduced into Europe at the end of the fourth century, and spread rapidly throughout the whole of the West. It received a great impulse through the work of St Benedict, the founder of the famous monastery of Monte Cassino (between Rome and Naples). About 527, he drew up for his monks