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978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

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LIFE
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

III & IV
MEN AND MANNERS
MONKS, FRIARS AND NUNS

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIFE
IN THE MIDDLE AGES

SELECTED
TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED

BY

G. G. COULTON

III & IV

MEN AND MANNERS

MONKS, FRIARS AND NUNS

CAMBRIDGE
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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
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G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To
MY WIFE

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978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

(January 1928)

THE original volume was felt by some readers to be rather bulky; here, therefore, it is divided into separately purchasable parts, arranged roughly according to subject. The first and largest deals with *Religion, Folk-Lore and Superstition*; the second, with *Chronicles, Science and Art*; the third, with *Men and Manners*; the fourth, with *Monks, Friars and Nuns*. The first is enlarged by the addition of three extracts which were not in the first edition, two of which refer to subjects of considerable recent interest, St Joan and the Inquisition. The fourth volume is considerably enlarged, especially by the inclusion of *My Lord Abbot* from *Petit Jean de Saintré*. I have been able to correct a few mistakes and add a few notes; otherwise, there has been little opportunity of bringing the book up to date. For the re-arrangement of the extracts and the revision of the proofs, and much other help, I am indebted to my wife.

G. G. C.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

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978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION

(*May 1910*)

THIS book appeals to the increasing body of readers who wish to get at the real Middle Ages; who, however impatient of mere dissertations and discussions, are glad to study genuine human documents, and to check the generalizations of historians by reference to first-hand facts. The Author has, therefore, attempted to compile a catena of such documents, each more or less complete in itself, but mostly too long for full quotation by historians. Moreover, he claims to cover a wider ground than most of the formal histories. The records here printed represent thirty years' study among all kinds of medieval writings, and could scarcely be outdone in this respect but by scholars who have better work to do. They have been chosen as specially characteristic of the period, and as appealing also to that deeper humanity which is common to all minds in all periods. They treat of clergy and laity, saints and sinners; spiritual experiences, love, battles, pageants, and occasionally the small things of everyday life. Drawn from six different languages, the large majority of these extracts are here translated for the first and perhaps the last time, since they are only the cream from bulky and often inaccessible volumes. A few are from manuscripts. If, on the whole, religious life is more fully represented here, and that life itself in its least conventional aspects, this want of strict proportion is more or less inherent in the plan of the work. We do not go abroad to meet Englishmen, or into the Middle Ages for the commonplace; though an occasional touch of this kind may help to show us the essential uniformity of little things in all ages. We most want to hear of those who, for good or evil, stand apart from the rest; and in the Middle Ages, as now, the evil generally lent itself best to picturesque description. The Author has, however, done all he can, consistently with any measure of historical truth, to avoid those darkest

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

ix

sides of all upon which the scope of his *From St Francis to Dante* compelled him to dwell at some length.

Several of the best books, being easily accessible elsewhere, are omitted here. From one or two more, only just enough is given to indicate the value of the rest, already sufficiently translated. It was impossible, within any reasonable compass, to exploit the rich mine of Franciscan and Dominican records also; a small fraction of these have already been printed in *From St Francis to Dante*, and the rest are reserved for a later volume. With these necessary exceptions, it is hoped that the present selection may be in some real sense representative. How far it is from being exhaustive, those will know best who have read most widely. From such critics the Author can only claim indulgence for this first attempt in English to cover Medieval Life as a whole.

G. G. C.

40 MILL ROAD
EASTBOURNE

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION OF PART IV

(December 1929)

THIS volume is very considerably enlarged in the present edition; it has been increased by more than a hundred pages. The additional matter consists of extracts which I had made for a volume planned ten years ago, which was to illustrate every side of monastic life. A good deal of that material will be summarized in the third volume of my *Five Centuries of Religion*, which I hope to bring out in the course of 1930; but many passages were too long for that volume, yet too valuable to abridge farther than they will be found abridged here. The story of *How Friar Michael was burned*,

A*

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- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

PREFACE

and the *Abbot, Lady, and Knight* from *Petit Jean de Saintré*, are of this character. Friar Michael's story has been far too much neglected by historians of the Inquisition; and if, as in the Saintré case and in that of Caesarius of Heisterbach, I give long extracts from books which can now be procured in their completeness, this is because I made my own versions long ago, and because the stories seemed too important to be omitted from any collection of this kind. They may, after all, send some readers on from the present volume to the full translations of the books from which they are taken.

One valuable criticism which has reached me must be met by a frank confession. In thus splitting my old *Garner* into four volumes for the reader's convenience, I ought to have followed my first impulse, and divided them by order of time, not according to their subject-matter, which, moreover, was sometimes rather difficult to decide; one and the same story might be counted with equal truth as illustrating Monasticism or Adventure. Within each volume, the chronological order has indeed been kept, roughly at least; but in the book as a whole it has been broken. This, as my kind critic points out, has the great disadvantage that the reader does not see for himself, with sufficient clearness, how things progressed from generation to generation in the Middle Ages; my arrangement may deceive him into a too static view of these five centuries. For this I must here apologize; yet, even thus, it may be permissible to suggest some sort of remedy for any really determined student who has been extravagant enough to buy all four volumes. Dates, exact or approximate, are given for every extract; he may therefore follow the chronological order by skipping from volume to volume. This, however, I point out not in excuse but only in palliation of an error which I now see plainly enough.

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978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

PART III: MEN AND MANNERS

		PAGE
1	Archiepiscopal Manners	<i>Gervase of Canterbury</i> 1
2	A Royal Inferno	<i>Peter of Blois</i> 2
3	Fair Rosamund	<i>Trevisa's Higden</i> 5
4	A Plain-spoken Patriarch	" 6
5	Shipman's Law	<i>Roger de Hoveden</i> 8
6	Life on a Hanse Ship	<i>T. D. Wunderer</i> 9
7	Trial by Battle	... <i>Britton</i> 11
8	Flowers and Fair Ladies	<i>Walther v. der Vogelweide</i> 14
9	Love and Dream	" 15
10	A World Growing Old	" 16
11	A Royal Nemesis	<i>Lanercost Chronicle</i> 18
12	Death of Alexander III	" 19
13	Will of the Griskin	" 21
14	The Archdeacon's Purse	" 23
15	The Siege of Carlisle	" 24
16	A Voluntary Nebuchadnezzar	<i>Jacques de Vitry</i> 27
17	The Stingy Knight	" 28
18	The Pilgrims' Perils	" 28
19	The Jew and the Blasphemer	" 29
20	Wedding Customs	" 29
21	Broken Vows	" 29
22	A Sucking-Prince	<i>Godefroid de Bouillon</i> 30
23	The Course of True Love	<i>Flamenca</i> 32
24	A Good Canon	<i>Caesarius of Heisterbach</i> 37
25	A Simple Soul	" 45
26	The Castle of Love	<i>Rolandino of Padua</i> 47
27	An Oxford Brawl	<i>Matthew Paris</i> 49
28	A Rhyme of Fair Ladies	<i>Reliquiae Antiquae</i> 52
29	Saint Douceline	<i>Philippine de Porcellet</i> 54
30	Tricks of Trade	<i>Berthold of Ratisbon</i> 57
31	Women's Dress	" 63
32	Hunters and Farmers	<i>Thomas of Chantimpré</i> 66
33	Calf-Love	<i>Ulrich v. Lichtenstein</i> 67

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

CONTENTS

		PAGE
34	Medieval Surgery	<i>Ulrich v. Lichtenstein</i> 69
35	Ulrich and his Dulcinea	" 73
36	A Merciful Archbishop	<i>Wright's Latin Stories</i> 85
37	A Jongleur's Revenge	" 85
38	A Woman's Oaths	" 86
39	The Priest's Fate	" 87
40	A Bishop's Champion	<i>St Thomas de Cantilupe</i> 87
41	Wager of Battle and Witchcraft	<i>Year Books</i> 89
42	The Bishop and his Mother	<i>R. de Graystones</i> 92
43	A Lordly Bishop	" 93
44	A Monastic Alchemist	<i>T. Walsingham</i> 95
45	A Poet's Complaint of the Blacksmiths	<i>Reliquiae Antiquae</i> 99
46	The Ugly Duckling	<i>Cuvelier</i> 100
47	Capture of the Castle of Fougeray	" 105
48	The Siege of Melun	" 108
49	The Almighty Dollar	<i>Eustache Deschamps</i> 112
50	University Expenses	" 113
51	Marital Amenities	<i>La Tour-Landry</i> 114
52	The Lost Marriage	" 117
53	Train up a Wife in the Way she should go	<i>Anon.</i> 119
54	Tricks of Trade	<i>John Gower</i> 119
55	A Mortuary Case	<i>Anon.</i> 123
56	Mortuary Profits	" 126
57	Mortuary Results	" 126
58	Wife to Husband	<i>Paston Letters</i> 127
59	Husband to Wife	" 129
60	Business Matches	" 130
61	The Course of Love	" 132
62	The Same	" 133
63	The Same	" 134
64	The Same	" 135
65	The Same	" 136
66	The Same	" 136
67	An Etonian's Romance	" 138
68	On with the New	" 139
69	A Sad Ending	" 140
70	Good Ale	<i>Anon.</i> 140
71	Wives at the Tavern	" 141
72	The Freshman's Ordeal	" 144
73	A Farmer's Will	" 147
74	Another	" 148

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

		xiii
		PAGE
75	A Bishop's Installation Banquet	150
76	Animals before the Law	152
77	A Noble Bishop	153
78	Duke and Bishop	154
79	Ambassadors take Measure of a Princess	155
80	A Healthy Appetite	163
81	Feminine Perversity	165

PART IV: MONKS, FRIARS AND NUNS

		PAGE
1	A Hermit's Paradise	1
2	From Robber to Saint	3
3	The Ideal Nun	5
4	The Monk's View of Womankind	22
5	Fasting and Reaction	28
6	Monastic Poverty	29
7	The Invention of a Relic	29
8	Monks and Labour	32
9	A Fighting Monk	39
10	A Royal Monk	42
11	A Monastic Backwoodsman	43
12	A Founder's Precautions	47
13	The Three Inseparables	50
14	Private Tuition in a Castle	57
15	The Unwelcome Visitor	65
16	Abbey Visitors	71
17	Huns in the Cloister	74
18	An Abbot's Birth and Election	78
19	A Monastic Physician	83
20	Othloh's Temptations	84
21	A Scene	93
22	Monastic Converts	93
23	A Charitable Foundation	93
24	Monastic Relics	94
25	Monastic Serfs	95
26	The Monk's God: Last Things	95

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

CONTENTS

		PAGE
27	A Group of Converts	<i>Annales Benedictini</i> 97
28	Child Monks	<i>Custumal of Bec</i> 98
29	Train up the Child	<i>Eadmer</i> 101
30	The Sin of Laughter	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> 104
31	Divine Charity	" 105
32	The Monk's Vocation	<i>Annales Benedictini</i> 106
33	The Nun's Dowry	<i>Marbod, Bishop of Rennes</i> 107
34	An Ageing World	<i>Dugdale's Monasticon</i> 108
35	The Besetting Demons	<i>Peter the Venerable</i> 110
36	Christmas Day	" 112
37	The Fate of Sacrilege	" 112
38	A Faithful Steward	<i>Chronicle of Abbey of Morigny</i> 120
39	The Shadow of the Rod	<i>Carmina Medii Aevi</i> 122
40	Monastic Quarrels	
	(a) From the Papal Standpoint	<i>Pérard's Recueil</i> 125
	(b) From the Monastic Standpoint	
		<i>Edmund of Hadenham</i> 126
41	A Nunnery Miracle	<i>Marsilia, Abbess of St-Amand</i> 128
42	The Bandit Cloistered	<i>Chronicle of Morigny</i> 131
43	An Abbot's Autobiography	<i>Guibert de Nogent</i> 133
44	Monastic Interiors	" 141
45	A Royal Abbot	<i>St Bernard</i> 155
46	Monastic Thrift	<i>Suger's Historia</i> 157
47	St Bernard's Character	<i>Trevisa's Higden</i> 160
48	His Personal Appearance	<i>Alan of Auxerre</i> 162
49	His Austerities	<i>Étienne de Bourbon</i> 163
50	St Bernard and the Shepherd Boys	<i>Jacques de Vitry</i> 164
51	A Convent Tragedy	<i>John the Hermit</i> 164
52	Religious Despair	" 165
53	St Bernard and the Novice	<i>Exord. Cisterc.</i> 166
54	The Lay-Brother's Workfellow	" 168
55	St Bernard as Puritan	<i>St Bernard</i> 169
56	Bishops in Council	<i>Berengarius</i> 175
57	The Heavenly Reapers	<i>Exord. Cisterc.</i> 177
58	Monastic Discipline	<i>Life of St Stephen of Obazine</i> 179
59	Monastic Etiquette	<i>Hugh of St-Victor</i> 183
60	Relics Re-found	<i>Life of St William</i> 186
61	Alsace in A.D. 1200	<i>Chronicle of Colmar</i> 189
62	God's Artist	<i>Roger of Helmershausen</i> 193
63	A Sabbatarian Missionary	<i>Roger de Hoveden</i> 196
64	The Saving Grace of the Rod	<i>St Antonino of Florence</i> 198

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS		XV
		PAGE
65	A Worldly Abbot <i>T. Wright's Poems of W. Mapes</i>	199
66	The Serf-Market <i>T. Madox's Formulare Anglicanum</i>	203
67	The Power of Poverty <i>St Antonino of Florence</i>	205
68	Royal Bloodsuckers <i>T. Hearne's Additions to Adam of Domerham</i>	206
69	Miracles and Money <i>Matthew Paris</i>	206
70	Hush-money <i>Adam of Domerham</i>	208
71	Monastic Wizards <i>Lanercost Chronicle</i>	209
72	The Demon Monk	210
73	Overworked St Francis	211
74	The Robber's Conversion <i>Jacques de Vitry</i>	212
75	The Perilous Familiarity of Women	214
76	Christ, Mary, and the Friars <i>St Antonino</i>	216
77	The Anatomy of Conversion <i>Caesarius of Heisterbach</i>	218
78	The Flesh-Pots of Egypt	232
79	A Model Monk	233
80	Monastic Charities	238
81	Date and Dabitur	239
82	The Might of Temptation	240
83	Monastic Fare	243
84	Sleep in Choir	244
85	Richwin and the Nun	246
86	Richwin's Death	248
87	The Lay-Brother's Ambition	248
88	Cuckoo, Cuckoo!	250
89	Fasting and Conscience	250
90	The Nun's Simplicity	252
91	A Knight's Conversion	253
92	Another <i>Chronicle of Monastery of Vilars</i>	256
93	A Mansion in Heaven <i>Caesarius of Heisterbach</i>	257
94	An Evil World	258
95	Unwilling Sceptics <i>Étienne de Bourbon</i>	259
96	Satan as an Angel of Light	260
97	Chaucer's Friar in the Making <i>St Bonaventura</i>	261
98	The Saving Virtue of a Cowl <i>Thomas of Chantimpré</i>	265
99	The Three Abbots <i>Wright's Latin Stories</i>	267
100	The Novice and the Geese	268
101	Touch Not Mine Anointed <i>Anon.</i>	268
102	Three Monks in Paradise	272
103	A Convent Election <i>T. Walsingham</i>	279
104	An Unwilling Convert <i>Pope John XXII</i>	282

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

CONTENTS

	PAGE
105 How Friar Michael was burned	
	<i>Scelta di Curiosità Letterarie</i> 284
106 A Saint's Conversion	<i>Vita di San Giovanni Columbini</i> 299
107 University Students	<i>Cistercian General Chapter Acts</i> 300
108 Monastic Parish Priests	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> 302
109 A Hard Case	" 306
110 Nuns' Dowries	<i>Bishop Spofford's Register</i> 307
111 A Dominican Friary	<i>Pierce the Ploughman's Crede</i> 308
112 Rich Indulgences	<i>Fordun's Scotichronicon</i> 310
113 Nunnery Discipline	<i>G. J. Aungier's Syon Monastery</i> 314
114 Sign-Speech	" 322
115 Abbot, Lady, and Knight	<i>Antoine de la Sale</i> 324
116 A Student's Conversion	<i>Johann Busch</i> 345
117 A Visitor's Experiences	" 348
118 Monastic Decay	<i>Johannes Trithemius</i> 353
119 Sea-sickness of the Soul	<i>Johann Geiler</i> 357
120 The Eve of the Reformation	" 360
121 An Impostor Exposed	<i>Sir Thomas More</i> 361
INDEX TO PART III	363
INDEX TO PART IV	379

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-09400-9 - Life in the Middle Ages, III and IV: Men and Manners
- Monks, Friars and Nuns

G. G. Coulton

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN PART III

Champions Fighting	<i>page</i>	12
Belfry and Assault		25
A Castle of Love		48
A Surgical Operation		71
Storm of Aubenton		109
A Medieval Shop		121

IN PART IV

Lady of about 1150 A.D.	<i>page</i>	134
Plan of the Abbey of Clairvaux		161
The Portal of Vézelay		170
The Abbey of Cîteaux		180
David playing on a Rote		275
Abbot and Death		327