

SPECULUM

A JOURNAL OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES



EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE formation in America of a MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY is an encouraging sign of the times. The conception of the Middle Ages as a period of dark ignorance, crude taste, and blind fanaticism has few supporters left. It may safely be relegated to those outworn superstitions once most effectively damned if branded as mediaeval. It is more and more apparent that in letters and institutions, philosophy and art, the Middle Ages present a chapter in the development of civilization which the student of human progress can ill afford to neglect. We may no longer bestow a civil leer on

the Classics of an age that heard of none.

Rather, we turn to Jean de Meun, Dante, and Chaucer for beauties of form, heights of thought, and pleasant scenes from the comedy of life that can challenge comparison, certainly, with anything in the time of Pope. The MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY will, we hope, become a rallying point for the cultivation and study of these Middle Ages.

The history of the movement that has led to the establishment of the ACADEMY is presented in the following pages by Professor Coffman, who has been, from the start, the life of the undertaking. The ACADEMY embodies no visionary scheme of a few enthusiasts. It is the natural flower of an irresistible growth. An interest in Mediaeval Latin is the bond that has united the members of this society from its inception; it is the bond that next to the Church, or, rather, as part and parcel of the Church, united the mediaeval communities themselves. But while Mediaeval Latin is still the centre of our interests, it is not the circumference. The new ACADEMY would include in its scope the entire civilization of the Middle Ages. It welcomes to

membership any citizens of our country or other countries who cherish a lively and intelligent interest in mediaeval culture and its significance for our times.

The ideals of the ACADEMY will be illustrated, we hope, in our journal, SPECULUM. The term Middle Ages we take in a widely comprehensive sense. On what lies outside, SPECULUM cannot well be focussed; its range is large enough as it is. But any aspect of an outlying period that bears significantly on the Middle Ages may appropriately be discussed in this journal. Just how many centuries are included in the Middle Ages everybody knows but no two can define in the same way. Following the example of St Augustine when confronted by a theological problem of some moment, we would answer, "If you ask us not, we know; if you ask us, we know not." Contributors need not consider dates and border-lines, if the point of their discourse is directed at what everybody would agree is Mediaeval. SPECULUM, this mirror to which we find it appropriate to give a Latin name, suggests the multitudinous mirrors in which the people of the Middle Ages liked to gaze at themselves and other folk — mirrors of history and doctrine and morals, mirrors of princes and lovers and fools. We intend no conscious follies, but we recognize satire, humor, and the joy of life as part of our aim. Art and beauty and poetry are a portion of our mediaeval heritage. Our contribution to the knowledge of those times must be scholarly, first of all, but scholarship must be arrayed, so far as possible, in a pleasing form. No subject is common or unclean merely because it deals with small details; but details must tend towards a significant goal. It is no less our purpose to avoid vain repetition, the popularization of matters well-known. We aim at what is new, in fact or statement or interpretation. Propaganda, in the recent and repellent sense of the word, is excluded from our programme. Our pages are open to contributors of all shades of belief or point of view. They may regard the Ages of Faith with adoration or with contempt, if only they will tell us something about them. It is thus our hope that from many angles, new glimpses of history and philosophy, letters and art will find reflection in this mirror of mediaeval life.

E. K. R.