The Revival of Learning in the West
1265 to 1400.
Previous to the fourteenth century the culture and learning of the world had belonged to the East. Italy, true, had always retained an influence from the Civilization of Ancient Rome; but the Orient defined of her former prestige and political renown, still fortified the Art and Sciences, and gave them vitality of advance they had offered up to this time.

The learning of the West was inherited from Roman civilization. The Roman Church held all the existing culture within its walls. The customs of the Church and Age regarded it as useful only to the Church and its Clergy in their influence over the masses. The broad culture of the East was fatal to all such ideas. As a result of the Crusades was that great awakening of individual thought which changed the whole West, its governments and customs.
The period of which I propose to write, begins with the fall of Damas and extends to the close of the 14th century. It is the period characterized in history as the Revival of Learning in the West. 1265 to 1400. It is an age which saw most remarkable things. It saw the Emancipation of human thought from the trammels of the Church; the decline of the Papal Power with the "Great Schism" of the West; It gave birth to an array of minds and talent which the world has always been proud to admire. It saw the Arts and Sciences endowed with a fresh life. It brought forth inventions which have proved of incalculable aid in the World's growth. Indeed, it has furnished the broad foundations upon which Modern Scholarship stands.

The Watchword of the Age was "War, War on all sides". England was attempting to subjugate...
Scotland under Edward I. She had obtained for her "Magna Carta" and was already planting the seeds of popular liberty. Oxford had been founded and the condition of the English people was daily improving.

The 14th century finds her engaged in war with France. The century closes with Henry III just seated on the throne. Her schools were in front rank and internal prosperity was on the increase. Chaucer and Roger Bacon are the gifts to the world during this period. She produced many more great and wise scholars than William of Malmsbury and John of Salisbury, besides her clergy, who have been educated men in all times; but Chaucer and Bacon are England's two prominent figures. The latter are much the father of science as the former was of English poetry. In France the case was different. The days of St. Louis were past and Philip the
Handsome was King. He was a most unscrupulous man who clipped off his face in low manner of obtaining his desired ends. It was his ambition to mis the Pope, at that time Boniface VIII. The Pope was a man of wild personal ambition and allowed himself to clasp to the lowest methods for accomplishing his purposes. A relentless man was enticed into by the French king and the Pope. It and its consequences are the principal events in French history for the Century. It is of importance in this connection, because for the first time literary talent was made use of in the defense of both parties. John, of Paris, a Dominican monk, spoke for Philip, and Daide spoke for Louis of Barancy. The struggles with England and the Church continuing after the death of Philip and through the century. The renowned battles of Crécy (1346) and of Poitiers (1356).
must be noted in this connection.

In learning, France had the great University of Paris, whether thousands of young men flocked for instruction, as at the same time they were gathering in at Oxford in England. Philosophy and Roman Law, with the Mathematics of Euclid made up the curriculum of study.

Italy still held the shadow of the culture of Ancient Rome. She was always regarded as more cultured than the rest of Europe. It was the day of Italian republics and the century was convulsed by the contests between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Bible wars were being carried on everywhere. The standard of culture was high. Italian youth were mostly educated by private tutors rather than in public schools, a practice derived from the Romans.
I have spoken of these three states at length, for they took the most prominent parts in the movement. The whole of Europe was in a state of distraction. Along with the troubles of England, France and Italy, Spain and Portugal were engaged in the struggle between the Moor and the Christian. Rival Emperors were contending for the throne of Germany. Louis of Bavaria and Frederick of Austria, while in the East the Turks were upon Constantinople. Thus you see what a state of turmoil must have pierced all Europe. War, war everywhere, but still it was a grand formative period and did create great things.

It is an ill-mind which does us no good. Philip the Handsome, with all his wickedness in his contest for the control of the papacy, accomplished great things unintentionally.
no doubt, for the Emancipation of Human Thought.
Throughout the Dark Ages, it had been uneasy to
dispute the decisions of an ecclesiastical council. And
the influence of the church over men's minds can
not be estimated. But when the earthly head of the
Christian church became so debased that he
allowed himself to enter into a struggle with a
temporal monarch. Then men were compelled to
think for themselves and the corruptions and
failings of the church were so plain that they threw
off the papal yoke and asserted the higher power
of their own individual reason. The decline of
the papal power in Europe was then a very prominent
factor in this Revival of Learning. Another cause
which brought it about at this period, was the
great array of talent and the inventive and
discoveries in science. But these are more of an
incidental character, for history concurs in the fact that whenever an age has demanded special talent, it has always been forthcoming. Cromwell in the English Revolution, Luther in the Reformation, Washington, at the birth of the American Republic and Grant in our Civil War are all witnesses to the truth of this statement.

There are thousands of names familiar to the scholar which would be called great in connection with this movement, but here I shall speak only of those who stood forth as leaders in the period, whose ability, alone would mark any age as great. Dante, Chaucer, John Wycliff and Roger Bacon with a mention of his or their others.

Dante was born in 1265. He received the education of an Italian gentleman
and seemed destined for a bright political career.

The uncertainties, however, of politics left him an exile early in his public life, and he devoted his wonderful talents to literature. He is said to have more to from the Italian language than any other man. His great work "The Divine Comedy" reflects as in a mirror the customs of the age. It is divided into three grand parts. The Inferno, where all whose lives have been unfavourably noticed he imagines have gone. The Purgatory, where many whose in life were great and good are doing temporary penance for minor sins. — and then the Paradise. Virgil has been hidden. Farewell, and his beloved Beatrice now guides him through the "Abode of the Blessed." Here he gives us his ideas of perfection of character and a lofty ideal he certainly had.
The great diversity of his talents and their high aim could not have been better shown than in this work. He not only reflects the customs, superstitious and religious beliefs of the Dark Ages but he discusses with the mind of a master all ancient philosophy and learning; systems of government and political creed. He is, as well, a bine poet, for he has put his soul into his work and he appeals to more higher motives. It is fortunate for these times of literary awakening that men like Dante were there, who, by the power of their superior intellect could direct the thought of their fellows into noble channels. Dante did this giving to his work a lofty ideal which no age has surpassed upon. He died in 1321 an outcast, dependent upon the hospitality of friends for his daily support. I have answ
upon him and his work quite at length, because he belongs not to Italy alone, but the whole civilized world has felt his influence. His writings will never be popular because they are beyond the vision of the ordinary man.

But we owe him a lasting debt of gratitude for the grand thoughts he has suggested to the leading minds of other ages. I quote from a lecture on "Dante and the Rest of Modern Poetry" by Dr. John Lord—"Could the proscribed and Exiled poet have cast his prophetic eye down the vista of the ages and seen how his frown, wrinkle in sorrow, would be scattered to joy among the nations, suggesting grand thoughts to Million, reappearing even in the creations of Michael Angelo, coloring art itself, wherever art cuts the sunshine and beautiful, inspiring all
subsequent literature, dignifying the life of
letters, and gracing philosophy as well as poetry
with new glories,"—could he have seen all this
how his exultant soul would have rejoiced, even
as did Abraham, when, amidst the ashes of the
funeral pyre he had prepared for Isaac, he
saw the future glories of his descendents; or as
Bacon, when, amidst calumnies, he foresaw that
his name and memory would be held in honor
by posterity, and that his method would be received
by all future philosophers as one of the priceless
triumphs of genius "to mankind." He was indeed
the central figure of his time, head and shoulders
above all else.

The mantle of Dante seemed to have fallen on Petrarch who flourished from 1304 to 1374.
He lived with Boccaccio, who lived from 1313 to 1375.
completed the great Italian Triad. Boccaccio was the first Italian prose writer of note. These three have done more than anyone else to raise the Italian literature and language to the high place it has universally held.

Geoffrey Chaucer's life was lived between the years of 1328 and 1400. He was educated at Oxford and Cambridge and sent to the University of Paris to complete his studies. He removed to England "a learned doctor" and the reverence in which the age held learning gave him a high position. He was the companion of the princes, but his keen mind remained intact. He is best known for his "Canterbury Tales." His clubbing around the pilgrims who come to the shrine of St. W. A. Beckett all the customs of English life of the age. He was a popular writer for the time.
Hi people on familiar ground and thrives at all
held up their prevailing sins and print of God
and nobler living. He is a contrast to Dante
lacking the seriousness but still possessed of the
same keen insight and desire for better things.

He was a favorite of John of Gaunt, Duke of
Lancaster and his intimately associated with
John Wycliffe. He is esteemed the Father of
English poetry. His writings did much to form
the language, and certainly were a potent
factor in directing the thought of the Age into
proper channels.

John Wycliffe, the Morning Star
of the Reformation" is too important a character
to be forgotten here. His name suggests to us
the first translation of the Bible into the
English tongue. The Christian world over
very much to train for this. John Wickliffe was a
backslider from the Römisch Church, but when
Wickliffe backslide there is a sound reason for it.
He realized the necessity of the time and raised
himself to them. The Lollarde were a persecuted
sect, but 'Truth crushed to earth will rise again'.
It rose in Bohemia with John Hus as its
champion. The weakness of earthly power could
not withstand the force of Truth, and Lollardism
lived in England till it was taken into the
greater Reformattion of the 16th century. As Luthur,
in his translation of the Bible into German,
had aided greatly in forming the German
language, so Wickliffe formed a little
service to the English language.
Roger Bacon belonged to an earlier
date—1214 to 1292—but his work belongs with
During this period, he is the "Father of Science." A sound literary mind must have beneath it a sound philosophy. The philosophy of Roger Bacon will always be regarded as sound in its principles, although later developments have, and still may, show him to have been wrong in many points. His followers were persecuted and James says he did just in time, else he would have been turned. But the products of his mind they could not destroy and have been a precious legacy for the world.

Of the Inventions and discoveries I must speak briefly. The use of gunpowder is interesting in this connection only as it indicates the growth of Science. The Mariner's Compass, because it was a tool in commerce, is understandable; for the activity of the world, mental...
and physical depend on commerce. The extant in art showed the Activity of Men's Minds and the advance of science. But it is the introduction of linen paper and the art of printing from movable types which one found to influence us most. Without this, however, bright men's minds might have tun, culture could never have been general. Surely, "The pen is mightier than the sword." The printed page has been the greatest civilizer of the time.

I have briefly gone over one of the most interesting periods of recorded history. Fully enough, I think to give an idea of the causes operating, of the men, and much of the Age. We have not far to look for the results. They are to be seen on every hand. The activities of men's minds, as grew to the brightness of the
"Renaissance" and we of to-day are reaping the benefits of that period. There have been stagnant periods but there has been, ever since the 14th Century, an onward progress in Literature and Science.

The present century must watch well, as she nears her end, that she jealously guards what her ancestors have bequeathed to her, and that she leaves it over to posterity in a fitting manner, having added to it the efforts of a busy Age.