

Europe and the Saracens

his hands and side through an imagination drunk with the contemplation and love of the crucified Redeemer. The author of the two most beautiful hymns of the mediæval period went to fanatical extremes in self-sought torture to atone for his own sins and for the good of others. Peter Nolasco in 1228 saw a vision of the Virgin Mary, and devoted all his property from that day to the purchasing of freedom for Christian captives from their Moorish masters. He founded the order of the Mercedarians, whose members even gave themselves into slavery to save a fellow Christian from becoming an apostate to Islam. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the monastic orders increased in numbers and influence. They formed the standing army of the papacy and were generally promoters of learning, science, and art. The Franciscans were one of the strongest orders, altho one of the latest.