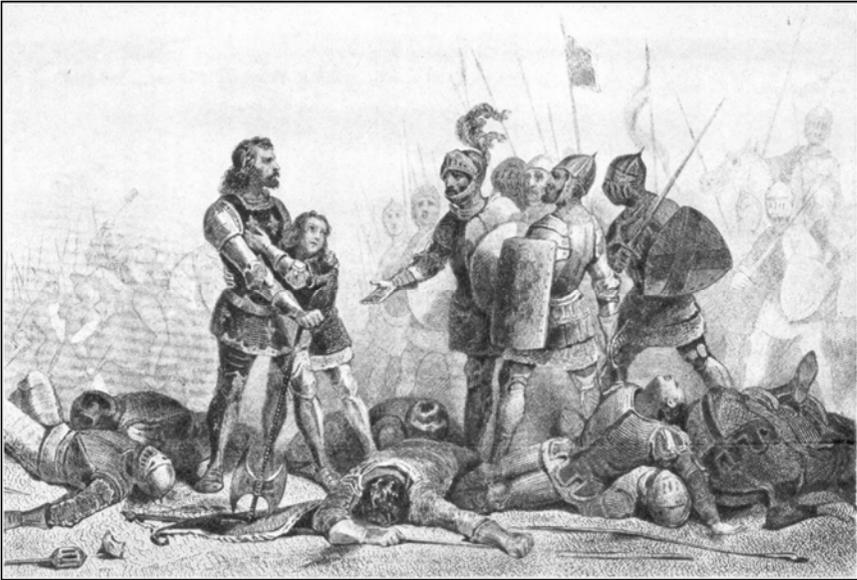


# **THE STORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES**



KING JOHN OF FRANCE TAKEN PRISONER AT POITIERS

# **THE STORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES**

**BY**

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*with illustrations*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**  
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## PREFACE

THE point of view from which this book is written is perhaps sufficiently set forth in the introductory chapter, but it may fittingly call for an additional word in this place. It is, namely, the point of view of one who believes that the child about to undertake the formal study of American history in the seventh and eight grades of our schools, needs first a preliminary sketch of the history of earlier times,—especially of the Middle Ages,—in order that our own history may appear in its true perspective and setting.

In attempting to make intelligible to children the institutions and events of the Middle Ages, the author is aware of the magnitude of the task which he has essayed. He is, however, firmly of the opinion that the difficulty arises frequently not so much from an inability on the part of the child to grasp the essential ideas underlying medieval relations, as from the lack of a clear understanding of these on the part of the narrator himself, and the need of finding familiar non-technical terms of definition. Whether the difficulty has been entirely surmounted in this work can only be determined by the test of use; but at least no pains have been spared in the effort. The

interest of the book, no doubt, might have been enhanced had the author wished to give stories, instead of "the story" of the Middle Ages. Detached episodes, striking figures, romantic tales, exist in plenty to rivet the child's attention and fire his fancy; but it has been no part of the plan of this work to draw attention to particular persons and events at the expense of the whole. "Somehow," writes Walter Bagehot of historical reading for children, "the whole comes in boyhood; the details later and in manhood. The wonderful series going far back to the times of the old patriarchs with their flocks and herds, the keen-eyed Greek, the stately Roman, the watching Jew, the uncouth Goth, the horrid Hun, the settled picture of the unchanging East, the restless shifting of the rapid West, the rise of the cold and classical civilization, its fall, the rough impetuous Middle Ages, the vague warm picture of ourselves and home,—when did we learn these? Not yesterday nor to-day; but long ago in the first dawn of reason, in the original flow of fancy. What we learn afterwards are but the accurate littlenesses of the great topic, the dates and tedious facts. Those who begin late learn only these; but the happy first feel the mystic associations and the progress of the whole."

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## INTRODUCTION

BOYS and girls—and grown folks also—often turn first to the last chapter of a book, before reading it, to see how it “ends.” At times this is a good idea; for when we know the end of a story, we can often better understand it as it is told. This then is what we will do in this book. We will first see what the “end” of the story of the Middle Ages is; then, as we read, we shall better understand how that end was brought about.

When Columbus in the year 1492 returned from his voyage of discovery, a keen rivalry began among the Old World nations for the possession of the New World. Expedition followed expedition; Spaniards, Portuguese, French, English, and later the Dutch and Swedes,—all began to strive with one another for the wealth and dominion of the new-found lands; and American history—our own history—begins.

But who were these Spaniards and Portuguese, these Englishmen and Frenchmen, these Dutchmen and Swedes? In the old days when the might and power of Rome ruled over the world, we hear nothing of them. Whence had they come? Were

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they entirely new peoples who had had no part in the old world of the Greeks and Romans? Were they the descendants of the old peoples over whom the Emperors had ruled from the city of the Seven Hills? Or did they arise by a mingling of the old and the new? Then, if they were the result of a mingling, where had the new races dwelt during the long years that Rome was spreading her empire over the known world? When and how had the mingling taken place? What, too, had become of "The Glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome"? Why was America not discovered and settled before? What were the customs, the ideas, the institutions which these peoples brought with them when they settled here? In short, what had been the history and what was the condition of the nations which, after 1492, began the struggle for the mastery of the New World?

To such questions it is the aim of this book to give an answer. It will try to show how the power of Rome fell before the attacks of German barbarians, and how, in the long course of the Middle Ages, new peoples, new states, a new civilization, arose on the ruins of the old.

At the beginning of the period Rome was old and worn out with misgovernment and evil living. But planted in this dying Rome there was the new and vigorous Christian Church which was to draw up into itself all that was best and strongest of the old world. The Germans were rude and uncivilized, but they were strong in mind and body, and possessed some ideas about government, women,

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and the family which were better than the ideas of the Romans on these subjects.

When the Germans conquered the Romans, and settled within the bounds of the Empire, it might well have seemed that the end of the world was come. Cities were plundered and destroyed; priceless works of art were dashed to pieces; and the inhabitants of many lands were slain or enslaved. For nearly a thousand years Europe did not entirely recover from the shock; and the period which immediately follows the invasions of the barbarians is so dreary and sad that historians have called it “the Dark Ages.”

But what was best in the old Greek and Roman civilization did not wholly perish. The Christian Church, too, grew steadily stronger, and sought to soften and civilize the rude Germans. The Germans, in turn, did not lose their vigor or their good ideas. At last from the combination of all these elements a new civilization arose,—stronger, better, and capable of higher development than the old,—and the Middle Ages were past. Then and only then could—and did—the new nations, which meanwhile had slowly been forming, set out on their careers of discovery and exploration which have made our New World possible.

So, we may say, the Middle Ages were the period when Europe became Europe, and made ready to found new Europes in America, in Australia, and in Africa. It was the growing-time for all the great harvest which has come since that time.

## THE ANCIENT GERMANS

WE must begin our story with those new races which were to mix their blood with that of the peoples of the Roman Empire, and form the nations of Europe to-day. These were the ancient Germans, the ancestors of the peoples who now speak German, English, Dutch, and Scandinavian. They lived then,—as part of their descendants still do,—in the lands extending from the North Sea and the Baltic on the North, to the Danube River on the South; and from the Rhine on the West, to the rivers Elbe and Oder on the East. This region is now one of the most flourishing countries in all the world, with many great cities and millions of inhabitants. At that time it had no cities at all and but few inhabitants. The people had just begun to settle down and cultivate the soil, where before they had moved from place to place to find fresh pasturage for their flocks and better hunting. The surface of the country was still almost as Nature had made it. Gloomy forests stretched for miles and miles where now there are sunny fields, and wide and treacherous marshes lay where the land now stands firm and solid.

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In this wild country, for many years, the Germans had room to live their own life. To the East were the Slavs, a people still ruder and more uncivilized than themselves. To the West were the Gauls, in what is now France. To the South were provinces of the Roman Empire, separated from them by the broad stream of the river Danube.



AN OLD GERMAN VILLAGE

The Germans, the Gauls, the Slavs, and the Romans,—though they did not know it,—might all call themselves cousins; for most of the peoples of Europe are descended from one great race, called the Aryans. Long before Athens or Rome was built, before the Germans had come into this land, before any nation had begun to keep a written account of its deeds, the forefathers of these peoples dwelt together somewhere in western Asia or eastern Europe. At last, for reasons which we cannot know after

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so great a stretch of time, these Aryan peoples separated and moved away in different directions. One branch of them entered Italy and became the ancestors of the Greeks and Romans. Another entered what is now France, and became the Gauls whom Caesar conquered. One settled in Germany, and still others settled in other lands both near and far.

In spite of the kinship between them, however, the Germans and Romans were very different in many ways. The Romans were short and dark, while the Germans were tall—very tall, they seemed to the Romans,—with fair skin, light hair, and clear blue eyes. The clothing of the Germans, unlike that of the Romans, was made chiefly from the skins of animals. Usually it did not cover the whole body, the arms and shoulders at least being left free. When the German was in a lazy mood he would sit for days by the fire, clad only in a long cloak of skins; then when he prepared to hunt or to fight, he would put on close-fitting garments and leave his cloak behind.

The houses in which the Germans lived were mere cabins or huts. Nothing was used but wood and that was not planed smooth, but was roughly hewn into boards and timbers. Sometimes a cave would be used for a dwelling, and often a house of timber would have an underground room attached to it; this was for warmth in winter and also for protection against their enemies. Sometimes in summer the people made huts of twigs woven together in much the same way that a basket is

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woven. Such houses were very flimsy, but they had the advantage of being easily moved from place to place. Often, too, the house sheltered not only the family, but the horses and cattle as well, all living under one roof. One can imagine that this was not a very healthful plan.

The Germans gained their living partly from hunting and partly from tilling the soil. They also depended a great deal upon their herds and flocks for meat, as well as for milk and the foods which they made from milk. The Germans paid great respect to their women, and the latter could often by their reproaches stop the men when defeated and in flight, and encourage them to do battle again. Nevertheless, the care of the cattle and the tilling of the soil, as well as the house-work, fell chiefly to the women. The men preferred to hunt or to fight; and when not doing either, would probably be found by the fire sleeping or idling away their time in games of chance. Most of the occupations of which we now see so much were not known to them. There was hardly any trading either among themselves or with other nations. Each family made its own things, and made very little more than it needed for its own use. The women spun and wove linen and other cloth, tanned leather, made soap,—which the Greeks and Romans did not know,—and a few other things. But all this was only for use in their own families. There were no trading places, and almost no commerce, except in a few things such as skins, and the amber of the Baltic Sea. One occupation, however, was considered good enough for any man to follow. This

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was the trade of the blacksmith. The skillful smith was highly honored, for he not only made tools to work with, but also weapons with which to hunt and to fight.

But usually the free man considered it beneath his dignity to work in any way. He was a warrior more than anything else. The Romans had reason to know that the Germans were very stubborn fighters; indeed, the Romans never did conquer Germany. The Germans were not made weak, as the Romans were, by indulging in all kinds of luxuries. They lived in the open air, they ate plain food, and they did not make their bodies tender by too much clothing. In every way their habits were more wholesome than those of the Romans; and besides this, each man had a spirit of independence that caused him to fight hard to avoid capture and slavery.

At one time, while Augustus was Emperor, three legions of the Roman army, under an officer named Varus, were entrapped and slain in the German forests. The shock of this defeat was felt so keenly at Rome that long after that the Emperor would awake at night from restless sleep, and cry out: "Varus, Varus, give me back my legions!" After this the Romans learned to be more careful in fighting the Germans. The Romans had the advantage of better weapons with which to fight, better knowledge of how to fight, and greater wealth with which to carry on a war. So, in spite of some decided victories over the soldiers of the Empire, the Germans were obliged for many years to acknowledge Rome as the stronger; and Roman soldiers

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were even stationed in some parts of the German territory.

When the German army was preparing for battle, the men arranged themselves so that each line had a greater number in it and was longer than the one in front. Thus the army formed a sort of wedge, which they called the "boar's head," from its shape. Arranged in this manner the army moved forward with one grand rush, guarding their sides with large wooden shields, and hewing with their swords and thrusting with their spears. If the first rush failed to dismay the enemy and turn them in flight, there was no longer any order or plan of battle. Each man then fought for himself, until victory or defeat ended the struggle.

Among the Germans no man dared to flee from the field of battle, for cowardice was punished with death. To leave one's shield behind was the greatest of crimes, and made a man disgraced in the sight of all. Bravery was the chief of virtues, and it was this alone which could give a man the leadership of an army. The general was chosen for his valor, and he kept his position only so long as he continued to show himself brave. He must be an example to all his followers and must fight in the front ranks. A general was made by his fellow warriors, who raised him upon their shields as a sign of their choice. If he proved less worthy than they had thought, they could as easily make another general in his place. The leader and his men were constantly reminded that upon their strength and courage depended the safety and happiness of their

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wives and children; for their families often followed the army to battle, and witnessed the combats from rude carts or wagons, mingling their shrill cries with the din of battle.

Times of peace among these early Germans would seem to us much like war. Every man carried his weapons about with him and used them freely. Human life was held cheap, and a quarrel was often settled by the sword. There was no strong government to punish wrong and protect the weak; so men had to protect and help themselves. A man was bound to take up the quarrels, or feuds, of his family and avenge by blood a wrong done to any of his relatives. As a result there was constant fighting. Violent deeds were frequent, and their punishment was light. If a man injured another, or even committed murder, the law might be satisfied and the offender excused, by the payment of a fine to the injured man, or to his family.

Some tribes of Germans had kings, but others had not, and were ruled by persons chosen in the meetings of the people, or "folk." Even among those tribes that had kings, the power of the ruler in time of peace was not very great. The kings were not born kings, but were chosen by the consent of the people. Some few families, because they had greater wealth, or for some other reason, were looked upon with such respect that they were considered noble, and kings were chosen from among their number. Yet each man stood upon his own merits, too; and neither wealth nor birth could keep a king in power if he proved evil in rule or weak in battle. The rulers

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decided only the matters that were of small importance. When it came to serious matters, such as making war or changing the customs of the tribe, the "folk" assembled together decided for itself. In their assemblies they showed disapproval by loud murmurs; while to signify approval, they clashed their shields and spears together. Every free man had the right to attend the folk-meeting of his district, and also the general assembly of the whole tribe. The power of the king was less than that of the assembly, and he was subject to it; for the assembly could depose the king, as well as elect him. In times of war, however the power of the kings was much increased; for then it was necessary that one man should do the planning, and time could not be taken up with assemblies.

At the period of which we are speaking, the Germans did not believe in one God as we do, but many. The names of some of their gods are preserved in the names which we have for the days of the week. From the god *Tius* comes Tuesday, from *Woden* comes Wednesday, and from *Thor* comes Thursday. *Tius* was the god of the heavens, and was at first the chief of the gods. Songs were sung in his honor, palaces named for him, and even human beings were sacrificed to him. *Woden* was afterward worshiped as the god of the sky, and also of the winds. Because he controlled the winds, it was natural that he should be the special god to whom those people looked who depended upon the sea; therefore he became the protector of sailors. He was also the god of war, and the spear was his emblem.

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After the worship of Tius died out, Woden became the chief god of the Germans. To him also there were sacrifices of human beings. Next in importance to Woden was Thor, the god of thunder and also of the household. His emblem was a hammer. When it thundered the people said that Thor with his hammer was fighting the ice-giants; so he was regarded as the enemy of winter, and the giver of good crops.

Besides these chief gods, there were many less important ones. Among these were spirits of the forests and rivers, and the "gnomes" or dwarfs who dwelt in the earth, guarding the stores of precious metals and jewels which it contains. Long after the old religion had come to an end the descendants of the ancient Germans remembered these spirits, and stories of their tricks and good deeds were handed down from father to son. In this way the Germans kept something of the old religion in the beautiful fairy tales which we still love; and in our Christmas and Easter customs we find other traces of their old beliefs and customs.

When missionaries went among them, however, they became Christians. This shows one of the greatest qualities which they possessed. They were willing and able to learn from other peoples, and to change their customs to suit new circumstances. Other races, like the American Indians, who did not learn so readily, have declined and died away when they have been brought in contact with a higher civilization. But the Germans could learn from the Greeks and the Romans; so they grew from

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a rude, half-barbarous people, into great and civilized nations.

## **BREAKING THE FRONTIER**

IF you look at the map of Europe you will see two great rivers,—the Rhine and the Danube,—flowing in opposite directions across the continent, one emptying into the North Sea and the other into the Black Sea. Their mouths are thousands of miles apart; yet when you follow up the course of each, you find that they come nearer and nearer, until, at their sources, the distance between them is no greater than a good walker might cover in a day. Thus these two rivers almost form a single line across the whole of Europe. Each in its lower course is broad and deep, and makes a good boundary for the countries on its banks. The Roman armies in the old days often crossed these rivers and indeed gained victories beyond them; but they found it so hard to keep possession of what they conquered there, that in the end they decided not to try. So for many years the Rhine and the Danube rivers formed the northern boundary of the Roman Empire.

In the last chapter you have read something of the Germans who lived north and east of this boundary. Among these peoples there was one which was to take the lead in breaking through the

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frontier and bringing about the downfall of the great empire of Rome. This was the nation of the Goths.

In the latter part of the fourth century after Christ, the Goths dwelt along the shores of the Black Sea and just north of the lower course of the Danube River. There they had been dwelling for more than a hundred years. According to the stories which the old men had told their sons, and the sons had told their children after them, the Goths at one time had dwelt far to the North, on the shores of the Baltic. Why they left their northern home, we do not know. Perhaps it was because of a famine or a pestilence which had come upon the land; perhaps it was because of a victory or a defeat in war with their neighbors; perhaps it was because of the urging of some great leader, or because of an oracle of their gods.

At any rate, the Goths did leave their homes by the Baltic Sea, to wander southward through the forests of what is now Western Russia. After many years, they had arrived in the sunnier lands about the Danube. There they had come in contact with the Romans for the first time. For a while there had been much fighting between the two peoples; but at last the Goths had been allowed to settle down quietly in these lands, on condition that they should not cross the river Danube and enter the Roman territory. And there they had dwelt ever since, living peaceably, for the most part, alongside their Roman neighbors and learning from them many civilized ways.

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The greatest thing that the Goths learned from the Romans was Christianity. Little by little they ceased worshiping Thor and Woden, and became Christians. This was chiefly due to one of their own men, named Ulfilas, who spent a number of years at Constantinople, the Roman capital of the world. There he became a Christian priest; and when he returned to his people he began to work as a missionary among them. Ulfilas had many difficulties to overcome in this work; but the chief one was that there was no Bible, or indeed any books, in the Gothic language. So Ulfilas set to work to translate the Bible from the Greek language into the Gothic. This was a hard task in itself; but it was made all the harder by the fact that before he could begin he had to invent an alphabet in which to write down the Gothic words. After the translation was made, too, he had to teach his people how to read it. In all this Ulfilas was successful; and under his wise and patient teaching the Goths rapidly became Christians. At the same time they were becoming more civilized, and their rulers were beginning to build up a great kingdom about the Danube and the Black Sea. Suddenly, however, an event happened which was to change all their later history, and indeed the history of the world as well. This was the coming of the Huns into Europe.

The Huns were not members of the great Aryan family of nations; and indeed the Germans and the Romans thought that they were scarcely human at all. They were related to the Chinese; and their strange features and customs, and their shrill

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voices, were new to Europe. An old Gothic writer gives us a picture of them. "Nations whom they could never have defeated in fair fight," he says, "fled in horror from those frightful faces—if, indeed, I may call them faces; for they are nothing



A HUN WARRIOR

but shapeless black pieces of flesh, with little points instead of eyes. They have no hair on their cheeks or chins. Instead, the sides of their faces show deep furrowed scars; for hot irons are applied, with characteristic ferocity, to the face of every boy that is born among them, so that blood is drawn from his cheeks before he is allowed to taste his mother's milk. The men are little in size, but quick and active in their motions; and they are especially skillful in

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riding. They are broad-shouldered, are good at the use of the bow and arrows, have strong necks, and are always holding their heads high in their pride. To sum up, these beings under the forms of men hide the fierce natures of beasts.”

The Goths were brave, but they could not stand against such men as these. The EAST-GOTHS, who dwelt about the Black Sea, were soon conquered, and for nearly a century they continued to be subject to the Huns. The WEST-GOTHS, who dwelt about the Danube, fled in terror before the countless hordes of the new-comers, and sought a refuge within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. As many as two hundred thousand fighting men, besides thousands of old men, women, and children, gathered on the north bank of the Danube, and “stretching out their hands from afar, with loud lamentations,” begged the Roman officers to permit them to cross the river and settle in the Roman lands.

The Roman Emperor, after much discussion, granted their request; but only on hard conditions, for he feared to have so many of the Goths in the land. The Gothic boys, he said, must be given up to the Romans as hostages, and the men must surrender their arms. The situation of the Goths was so serious that they were forced to agree to these terms; but many of them found means to bribe the Roman officers, to let them keep their arms with them. At last the crossing began; and for many days an army of boats was kept busy ferrying the people across the

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stream, which at this point was more than a mile wide.

In this way the West-Goths were saved from the Huns; but they soon found that it was only to suffer many injuries at the hands of the Roman officers. The emperor had given orders that the Goths were to be fed and cared for until they could be settled on new lands; but the Roman officers stole the food intended for them, and oppressed them in other ways. Some of the Goths, indeed, fell into such distress that they sold their own children as slaves in order to get food.

This state of affairs could not last long with so war-like a people as the Goths. One day, in the midst of a banquet which the Roman governor was giving to their leader, an outcry was heard in the palace-yard, and the news came that the Goths were being attacked. At once the Gothic leader drew his sword, saying he would stop the tumult, and went out to his men.

From that time war began between the Romans and the West-Goths. About a year after this (in the year 378 A.D.) a great battle was fought near Adrianople, a city which lies about one hundred and forty miles northwest of Constantinople. The Emperor Valens was himself at the head of the Roman army. His flatterers led him to believe that there could be no doubt of his success; so Valens rashly began the battle without waiting for the troops that were coming to assist him. The Romans were at a disadvantage besides. They were hot and

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tired, and their horses had had no food; the men, moreover, became crowded together into a narrow space where they could neither form their lines, nor use their swords and spears with effect. The victory of the Goths was complete. The Roman cavalry fled at the first attack; then the infantry were surrounded and cut down by thousands. More than two-thirds of the Roman army perished, and with them perished the Emperor Valens—no one knows just how.

The effects of this defeat were very disastrous for the Romans. Before this time the Goths had been doubtful of their power to defeat the Romans in the open field. Now they felt confidence in themselves, and were ready to try for new victories. And this was not the worst. After the battle of Adrianople the river Danube can no longer be considered the boundary of the Empire. The Goths had gained a footing within the frontier and could wander about at will. Other barbarian nations soon followed their example, and then still others came. As time went on, the Empire fell more and more into the hands of the barbarians.

These effects were not felt so much at first because the new Emperor, Theodosius, was an able man, and wise enough to see that the best way to treat the Goths was to make friends of them. This he did, giving them lands to till, and taking their young men into the pay of his army; so during his reign the Goths were quiet, and even helped him to fight his battles against his Roman enemies. One old chief, who had remained an enemy of the Romans, was received with kindness by Theodosius. After seeing

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the strength and beauty of the city of Constantinople, he said one day: "This Emperor is doubtless a god upon earth; and whoever lifts a hand against him is guilty of his own blood."

But the wise and vigorous rule of Theodosius was a short one, and came to an end in the year 395. After that the Roman Empire was divided into an Eastern Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, and a Western Empire, with its capital at Rome. After that, too, the friendly treatment of the Goths came to an end, and a jealous and suspicious policy took its place. Moreover, a new ruler, named Alaric, had just been chosen by the Goths. He was a fiery young prince, and was the ablest ruler that the West-Goths ever had. He had served in the Roman armies, and had there learned the Roman manner of making war. He was ambitious, too; and when he saw that the Empire was weakened by division, and by the folly of its rulers, he decided that the time had come for action. So, as an old Gothic writer tells us, "the new King took counsel with his people and they determined to carve out new kingdoms for themselves, rather than, through idleness, to continue the subjects of others."

## THE WANDERINGS OF THE WEST-GOTHS

UP to this time the Goths had entered only a little way into the lands of the Empire. Now they were to begin a series of wanderings that took them into Greece, into Italy, into Gaul, and finally into the Spanish peninsula, where they settled down and established a power that lasted for nearly three hundred years.



GOTHS ON THE MARCH

Their leader, Alaric, was wise enough to see that the Goths could not take a city so strongly walled as Constantinople. He turned his people aside from the attack of that place, and marched them to

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the plunder of the rich provinces that lay to the South. There they came into lands that had long been famous in the history of the world. Their way first led them through Macedonia, whence the great Alexander had set out to conquer the East. At the pass of Thermopylae, more than eight hundred years before, a handful of heroic Greeks had held a vast army at bay for three whole days; but now their feebler descendants dared not attempt to stay the march of Alaric. The city of Athens, beautiful with marble buildings and statuary, fell into the hands of the Goths without a blow. It was forced to pay a heavy ransom, and then was left "like the bleeding and empty skin of a slaughtered victim."

From Athens Alaric led his forces by the isthmus of Corinth into the southern peninsula of Greece. City after city yielded to the conqueror without resistance. Everywhere villages were burned, cattle were driven off, precious vases, statues, gold and silver ornaments were divided among the barbarians, and multitudes of the inhabitants were slain or reduced to slavery.

In all the armies of the Roman Empire, at this time, there was but one general who was a match for Alaric in daring and skill. He too was descended from the sturdy barbarians of the North. His name was Stilicho, and he was now sent by the Emperor of the West to assist the Eastern Emperor. He succeeded in hemming in the Goths, at first, in the rocky valleys of Southern Greece. But the skill and perseverance of Alaric enabled him to get his men out of the trap, while his enemies feasted and danced

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in enjoyment of their triumph. Then the Eastern Emperor made Alaric the ruler of one of the provinces of the Empire, and settled his people on the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea. In this way he hoped that the Goths might again be quieted and the danger turned aside. But Alaric only used the position he had won to gather stores of food, and to manufacture shields, helmets, swords, and spears for his men, in preparation for new adventures.

When all was ready, Alaric again set out, taking with him the entire nation of the West-Goths—men, women, and children—together with all their property and the booty which they had won in Greece. Now their march was to the rich and beautiful lands of Italy, where Alaric hoped to capture Rome itself, and secure the treasures which the Romans had gathered from the ends of the earth. But the time had not yet come for this. Stilicho was again in arms before him in the broad plains of the river Po. From Gaul, from the provinces of the Rhine, from far-off Britain, troops were hurried to the protection of Italy. On every side the Goths were threatened. Their long-haired chiefs, scarred with honorable wounds, began to hesitate; but their fiery young King cried out that he was resolved “to find in Italy either a kingdom or a grave!”

At last while the Goths were piously celebrating the festival of Easter, the army of Stilicho suddenly attacked them. The Goths fought stubbornly; but after a long and bloody battle Alaric was obliged to lead his men from the field, leaving behind them the slaves and the booty which they

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had won. Even then Alaric did not at once give up his plan of forcing his way to Rome. But his men were discouraged; hunger and disease attacked them; their allies deserted them; and at last the young King was obliged to lead his men back to the province on the Adriatic.

For six years Alaric now awaited his time; while Stilicho, meanwhile, beat back other invaders who sought to come into Italy. But the Western Emperor was foolish, and thought the danger was past. He listened to the enemies of Stilicho, and quarreled with him; and at last he had him put to death. At once Alaric planned a new invasion. Barbarian warriors from all lands, attracted by his fame, flocked to his standard. The friends of Stilicho, also, came to his aid. The new generals in Italy proved to be worthless; and the foolish Emperor shut himself up in fear in his palace in the northern part of the peninsula. Alaric meanwhile did not tarry. On and on he pressed, over the Alps, past the plains of the Po, past the palace of the Emperor, on to the “eternal city” of Rome itself.

In the old days, the Romans had been able to conquer Italy and the civilized world, because they were a brave, sturdy people, with a genius for war and for government. But long centuries of unchecked rule had greatly weakened them. Now they led evil and unhealthy lives. They neither worked for themselves, nor fought in their country’s cause. Instead, they spent their days in marble baths, at the gladiatorial fights and wild beast shows of the theaters, and in lounging about the Forum.

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In the old days Hannibal had thundered at the gates of Rome in vain; but it was not to be so now with Alaric. Three times in three successive years he advanced to the siege of the city. The first time he blockaded it till the people cried out in their hunger and were forced to eat loathsome food. Still no help came from the Emperor, and when they tried to overawe Alaric with the boast of the numbers of their city, he only replied: "The thicker the hay the easier it is mowed."

When asked what terms he would give them, Alaric demanded as ransom all their gold, silver, and precious goods, together with their slaves who were of barbarian blood. In dismay they asked: "And what then will you leave to us?" "Your lives," he grimly replied.

Alaric, however, was not so hard as his word. On payment of a less ransom than he had at first demanded, he consented to retire. But when the foolish Emperor, secure in his palace in Northern Italy, refused to make peace, Alaric advanced once more upon the doomed city, and again it submitted. This time Alaric set up a mock-Emperor of his own to rule. But in a few months he grew tired of him, and overturned him with as little thought as he had shown in setting him up. As a great historian tells us of this Emperor, he was in turn "promoted, degraded, insulted, restored, again degraded, and again insulted, and finally abandoned to his fate."

In the year 410 A.D., Alaric advanced a third time upon the city. This time the gates of Rome

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were opened by slaves who hoped to gain freedom through the city's fall. For the first time since the burning of Rome by the Gauls, eight hundred years before, the Romans now saw a foreign foe within their gates—slaying, destroying, plundering, committing endless outrages upon the people and their property. To the Romans it seemed that the end of the world was surely at hand.

At the end of the sixth day Alaric and his Goths came forth from the city, carrying their booty and their captives with them. They now marched into the south of Italy, destroying all who resisted and plundering what took their fancy. In this way they came into the southernmost part. There they began busily preparing to cross over into Sicily, to plunder that fertile province. But this was not to be. In the midst of the preparations, their leader Alaric—"Alaric the Bold," as they loved to call him—suddenly sickened. Soon he grew worse; and after an illness of only a few days, he died, leaving the Goths weakened by the loss of the greatest king they were ever to know.

Alaric's life had been one of the strangest in history; and his burial was equally strange. His followers wished to lay him where no enemy might disturb his grave. To this end they compelled their captives to dig a new channel for a little river near by, and turn aside its waters. Then, in the old bed of the stream, they buried their beloved leader, clad in his richest armor, and mounted upon his favorite war horse. When all was finished, the stream was turned back into its old channel, and the captives

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were slain, in order that they might not reveal the place of the burial. And there, to this day, rest the bones of Alaric, the West-Gothic King.



WEST-  
GOTHIC  
TOWER

Of the West-Goths after the death of Alaric, we need say very little. The foolish Emperor of the West remained foolish to the end; but his advisers now saw that something must be done to get rid of the barbarians. The new leader of the Goths, too, was a wise and moderate man. He saw that his people, though they could fight well, and overturn a state, were not yet ready to form a government of their own. "I wish," he said, "not to destroy, but to restore and maintain the prosperity of the Roman Empire." Other barbarians had meanwhile pressed into the Empire; so it was agreed that the Goths should march into Gaul and Spain, drive out the barbarians who had pushed in there, and rule the land in the name of the Emperor of the West. This they did; and there they established a power which became strong and prosperous, and lasted until new barbarians from the North, and the Moors from Africa, pressed in upon them, and brought, at the same time, their kingdom and their history to an end.

## **END OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE**

WHILE the West-Goths were winning lands and booty within the Empire, the other Germans could not long remain idle. They saw that the legions had been recalled from the frontiers in order to guard Italy. They saw their own people suffering from hunger and want. Behind them, too, they felt the pressure of other nations, driving them from their pastures and hunting grounds.

So the news of Rome's weakness and Alaric's victories filled other peoples with eagerness to try their fortunes in the Southern lands. Before the West-Goths had settled down in Spain, other tribes had begun to stream across the borders of the Empire. Soon the stream became a flood, and the flood a deluge. All Germany seemed stirred up and hurled against the Empire. Wave after wave swept southward. Horde after horde appeared within the limits of the Empire, seeking lands and goods. For two hundred years this went on. Armies and nations went wandering up and down, burning, robbing, slaying, and making captives. It was a time of confusion, suffering, and change; when the "uncouth Goth," the "horrid Hun," and wild-eyed peoples of

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many names, struggled for the lands of Rome. They sought only their own gain and advantage, and it seemed that everything was being overturned and nothing built up to take the place of what was destroyed. But this was only in seeming. Unknowingly, these nations were laying the foundations of a new civilization and a new world. For out of this mixing of peoples and institutions, this blending of civilizations, arose the nations, the states, the institutions, of the world of to-day.

In following the history of the West-Goths we have seen that some of these peoples had preceded the Goths into Spain. These were a race called the *VANDALS*. They too were of German blood. At one time they had dwelt on the shores of the Baltic Sea, near the mouth of the river Elbe. From there they had wandered southward and westward, struggling with other barbarian tribes and with the remaining troops of Rome's imperial army. After many hard-fought contests they had crossed the river Rhine. They had then struggled through Gaul, and at last had reached Spain. Now they were to be driven from that land, too, by the arrival of the West-Goths.

Just at this time the governor of the Roman province of Africa rebelled against the Emperor's government. To get assistance against the Romans, he invited the Vandals to come to Africa, promising them lands and booty. The Vandals needed no second invitation. The Strait of Gibraltar, which separates the shores of Spain from Africa, is only fifteen miles wide; but when once the Vandals were

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across that strait, they were never to be driven back again.

Twenty-five thousand warriors, together with their women, children, and the old men, came at the call of the rebellious governor. There they set up a kingdom of their own on Roman soil. A cruel, greedy people they were, but able. From their capital,—the old city of Carthage,—their pirate ships rowed up and down the Mediterranean, stopping now at this place and now at that, wherever they saw a chance for plunder. Their King was the most crafty, the most treacherous, the most merciless of the barbarian kings.

“Whither shall we sail?” asked his pilot one day, as the King and his men set out. “Guide us,” said the King, “wherever there is a people with whom God is angry.”

The most famous of the Vandal raids was the one which they made on the city of Rome, forty-five years after it had been plundered by Alaric. The rulers of the Romans were as worthless now as they had been at the earlier day. Again, too, it was at the invitation of a Roman that the Vandals invaded Roman territory. No defense of the city was attempted; but Leo, the holy bishop of Rome, went out with his priests, and tried to soften the fierceness of the barbarian King. For fourteen days the city remained in the hands of the Vandals; and it was plundered to their hearts' content. Besides much rich booty which they carried off, many works of art were broken and destroyed. Because of such de-

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struction as this, the name "Vandal" is still given to anyone who destroys beautiful or useful things recklessly, or solely for the sake of destroying them.

Another of the restless German peoples were the BURGUNDIANS. They, too, had once dwelt in the North of German, and had crossed the river Rhine in company with the Vandals. Gradually they had then spread southward into Gaul; and the result was the founding of a kingdom of the Burgundians in the valley of the Rhone River. From that day to this the name Burgundy,—as kingdom, dukedom, county, province,—has remained a famous one in the geography of Europe. But this people was never able to grow into a powerful and independent nation.

The ANGLES and SAXONS who conquered Britain were others of these peoples. They first settled in the island (so the story runs) on the invitation of the people of Britain. The Britons had lived so long under Roman rule that they had learned the ways of their masters, and had forgotten how to fight. So, when wild tribes of Ireland and Scotland came down from the West and North to attack them, the Britons were in an evil situation. To the Roman commander in Gaul they wrote: "The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea drives us back to the barbarians. Between them we are exposed to two sorts of death; we are either slain or drowned." When they found that the Romans were no longer able to aid them, the Britons asked help from a roving company of Saxons who had come in their long ships to the British shores. When the Angles and Saxons had once got a foothold, they proceeded

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to conquer the island for themselves. Thus the fairest portion of it came to be called Angleland or England. It was only after two centuries of hard fighting, however, that the conquest was completed. In the West the Britons long continued to keep their independence; and there, the “Welsh” or “foreigners” (as they were styled by the Saxons) continued to use their own language, to follow their own customs, and to obey their own Princes for hundred of years.

While the Germans were finding new homes in Roman territory, the restless Huns were ever pressing in from the rear, driving them on and taking their lands as they left. At the time when the Vandals were establishing their kingdom in Africa, and the Saxons were just beginning to come into Britain, a great King arose among the Huns. His name was Attila. Though he was a great warrior and ruler, he was far from being a handsome man. He had a large head, a flat nose, a few hairs in the place of a beard, broad shoulders, and a short square body.



COURT OF THE HUNS

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The chief god of the Huns was a god of war. As they did not know how to make statues or images of him, they represented him by a sword or dagger. One day a shepherd found an old sword sticking out of the ground, and brought it to Attila. This, the King said, was a sign that the whole earth should be ruled over by him.

Whether he believed in this sign himself or not, Attila used his own sword so successfully that he formed the scattered tribes of the Huns into a great nation. By wars and treaties he succeeded in establishing a vast empire, including all the peoples from the river Volga to the river Rhine. The lands of the Eastern Empire, too, were wasted by him, even up to the walls of Constantinople. The Empire was forced to pay him tribute; and an Emperor's sister sent him her ring, and begged him to rescue her from the convent in which her brother had confined her.

In the year 451 A.D., Attila gathered up his wild horsemen, and set out from his wooden capital in the valley of the Danube.



COIN OF  
ODOACER

Southward and westward they swept to conquer and destroy. It is said that Attila called himself the "Scourge of God." At any rate his victims knew that ruin and destruction followed in his track; and where he had passed, they said, not a blade of grass was left growing. On and on the Huns passed, through Germany, as far as Western Gaul; and men expected

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that all Europe would fall under the rule of this fierce people.

This, however, did not come to pass. Near the city of Chalons, in Eastern France, a great battle was fought, in which Romans and Goths fought side by side against the common foe, and all the peoples of Europe seemed engaged in one battle. Rivers of blood, it was said, flowed through the field, and whoever drank of their waters perished. At the close of the first day, the victory was still uncertain. On the next day Attila refused to renew the battle; and when the Romans and Goths drew near his camp, they found it silent and empty. The Huns had slipped away in the night, and returned to their homes on the Danube.

This was one of the decisive battles in the world's history, for it saved Europe from the Huns. Many legends came to cluster about it, and ages later men told how, each year on the night of the battle, the spirits of Goths and Huns rose from their graves, and fought the battle over again in the clouds of the upper air.

The next year Attila came again, with a mighty army, into the Roman lands. This time he turned his attention to Italy. A city lying at the head of the Adriatic was destroyed; and its people then founded Venice on the isles of the sea, that they might thenceforth be free from such attacks. Perhaps Attila might have pressed on to Rome and taken it, too, as Alaric had done, and as the Vandals were to do three years later. But strange misgivings fell upon him.

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Leo, the holy bishop of Rome, appeared in his court and warned him off. Attila, therefore, retreated, and left Rome untouched. Within two years afterward he died; and then his great empire dropped to pieces, and his people fell to fighting once more among themselves. In this way Christian Europe was delivered from one of the greatest dangers that ever threatened it.

Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Britain, had now been lost by the Romans; but amid all these troubles, the imperial government, both in the East and in the West, still went on. In the West the power had fallen more and more into the hands of chiefs of the Roman army. These men were often barbarians by blood, and did not care to be emperors themselves. Instead, however, they set up and pulled down emperors at will, as Alaric had once done.

In the year 476 A.D.—just thirteen hundred years before the signing of our Declaration of Independence,—the Emperor who was then ruling in the West was a boy of tender years, named Romulus Augustulus. He bore the names of the first of the kings of Rome, and of the first of the emperors; but he was to be the last of either. A new leader had now arisen in the army,—a gigantic German, named Odoacer. When Odoacer was about to come into Italy to enter the Roman army, a holy hermit had said to him: “Follow out your plan, and go. There you will soon be able to throw away the coarse garment of skins which you now wear, and will become wealthy and powerful.” He had followed this advice, and had risen to be the

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commander of the Roman army. The old leader, who had put Romulus Augustulus on the throne, was now slain by him, and the boy was then quietly put aside.

Odoacer thus made himself ruler of Italy; but he neither took the name of Emperor himself, nor gave it to any one else. He sent messengers instead to the Emperor of the East, at Constantinople, and laid at his feet the crown and purple robe. He said, in actions, if not in words: "One Emperor is enough for both East and West. I will rule Italy in your name and as your agent."

This is sometimes called the fall of the Western Empire; and so it was. Yet there was not so very much change at first. Odoacer ruled in Italy in much the same way as the Emperors had done, except that his rule was better and stronger.

After sixteen years Odoacer was overthrown, and a new ruler arose in his place. This was Theodoric, the King of the EAST-GOTHS. From the days of the battle of Adrianople to the death of Attila, this people had been subject to the Huns. At the battle of Chalons they had fought on the side of the Huns, and against their kinsmen, the West-Goths. Now, however, they were free; and a great leader had arisen among them in the person of Theodoric, the descendant of a long line of Gothic kings.

When Theodoric was a young boy, he had been sent as a hostage to Constantinople, where he had lived for ten years. There he had learned to like

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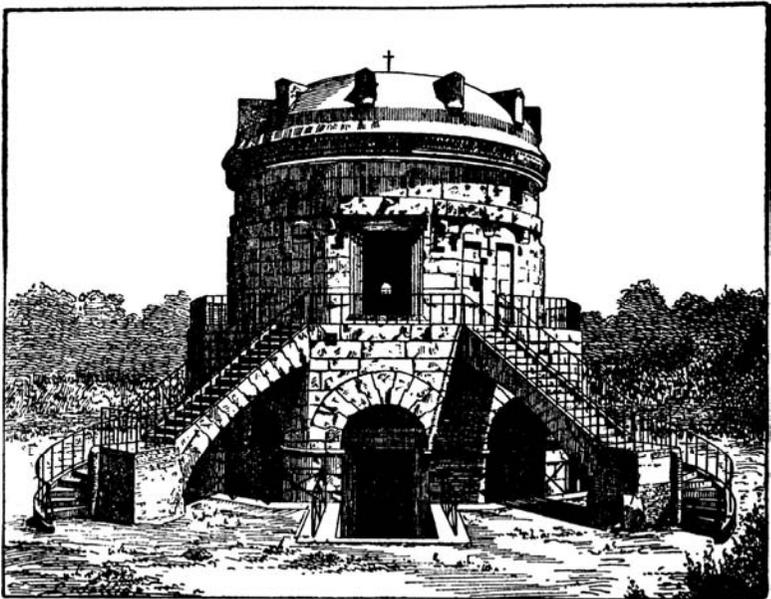
the cultured manners of the Romans, but he had not forgotten how to fight. When he had returned home, a handsome lad of seventeen, he had gathered together an army, and without guidance from his father, had captured an important city. This act showed his ability; and when his father died he was acknowledged as the King of his people. He was a man of great strength and courage; he was also wise and anxious for his people to improve. For some years his people had been wandering up and down in the Eastern Empire; but they were unable to master that land because of Constantinople's massive walls. So, with the consent of the Emperor, Theodoric now decided to lead his East-Goths into Italy, drive Odoacer from the land, and settle his people there.

The Goths set out over the Eastern Alps, two hundred thousand strong. With them went their wives and children, their slaves and cattle, and behind came twenty thousand lumbering ox carts laden with their goods. But Odoacer proved a stubborn fighter. Several hard battles had to be fought, and a siege three years long had to be laid to his capital before he was beaten. Then Theodoric, for almost the first and last time in his life, did a mean and treacherous act. His conquered enemy was invited to a friendly banquet; and there he was put to death with his own sword. In this way Theodoric completed the conquest that made him master of the whole of Italy, together with a large territory to the North and East of the Adriatic Sea.

For thirty-three years after that, Theodoric ruled over the kingdom of the East-Goths, as a wise

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and able king. Equal justice was granted to all, whether they were Goths or Italians; and Theodoric sought in every way to lead his people into a settled and civilized life. The old roads, aqueducts, and public buildings were repaired; and new works in many places were erected. Theodoric was not only a great warrior and statesman; he was also a man of deep and wide thought. If any man and any people were suited to build up a new kingdom out of the ruins of the Empire, and end the long period of disorder and confusion which we call the Dark Ages, it would seem that it was Theodoric, and his East-Goths. But no sooner was Theodoric dead, than his kingdom began to fall to pieces.



TOMB OF THEODORIC

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The Eastern Empire had now passed into the hands of an able Emperor, who is renowned as a conqueror, a builder, and a law-giver. His name was JUSTINIAN; and he was served by men as great as himself. Under their skillful attacks, much of the lands which had been lost were now won back. The Vandal kingdom in Africa was overturned; the islands of Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia were recovered; and at last, after years of hard fighting, the East-Goths too were conquered. The last remnant of that race then wandered north of the Alps, and disappeared from history.

It was only for a little while, however, that the Eastern Emperor was able once more to rule all Italy. Within thirteen years a new Germanic people appeared on the scene,—the last to find a settlement within the Empire. These were the LOMBARDS, or “Langobards,” as they were called from their long beards. Ten generations before, according to their legends, a wise queen had led their race across the Baltic Sea, from what is now Sweden, to Germany. Since then they had gradually worked their way south, until now they were on the borders of Italy. The northern parts of the peninsula at this time were almost uninhabited, as a result of years of war and pestilence. The resistance to the Lombards, therefore, was very weak; and the whole valley of the river Po—thenceforth to this day called “Lombard”—passed into their hands almost at a blow.

These Lombards were a rude people and but little civilized, when they first entered Italy. It was not until some time after they had settled there, that

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they even became Christians. A wild story is told of the King who led them into Italy. He had slain with his own hand the King of another German folk, and from his enemy's skull he had made a drinking cup, mounted in gold. His wife was the daughter of the King he had slain. Some time after, as he sat long at the table in his capital, he grew boisterous; and sending for the cup, he forced his Queen to drink from it bidding her "drink joyfully with her father." At this the Queen's heart was filled with grief and anger, and she plotted how she might revenge her father upon her husband. So, while the King slept one night, she caused an armed man to creep into the room and slay him. In this way she secured her revenge; but she, and all who had helped her, came to evil ends,—for, as an old writer says, "the hand of Heaven was upon them for doing so foul a deed."



IVORY COMB OF A  
LOMBARD QUEEN

The Lombards were not so strongly united as most of the Germans, nor was their form of government so highly developed. Many independent bands of Lombards settled districts in Central and Southern Italy, under the rule of their own leaders, or "dukes." In this way the peninsula was cut up into many governments. The northern part was under the Lombard King; a number of petty dukes each ruled over his own district; and the remainder, including

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the city of Rome, was ruled by the officers of the Eastern Emperor.

The kingdom of the Lombards lasted for about two hundred years. Then it, too, was overturned, and the land was conquered by a new German people, the greatest of them all and the only one, with the exception of the English, that was to establish a lasting kingdom. These were the FRANKS, who settled in Gaul, and founded France. But before we trace their history we must first turn aside and see how the Christian Church was gaining in strength and power in this dark period of warfare and confusion.

## **GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

IN another book you may have read of the trials which the early Christians had to endure under the Roman rule;—of how they were looked upon with scorn and suspicion; how they were persecuted; how they were forced to meet in secret caves called catacombs, where they worshiped, and buried their dead; and how at last, after many martyrs had shed their blood in witness to their faith, the Emperor Constantine allowed them to worship freely, and even himself became a Christian. After this, Christianity had spread rapidly in the Roman Empire; so that by the time the German tribes began to pour across the borders, almost all of the people who were ruled by the Emperor had adopted the Christian religion, and the old Roman worship of Jupiter, Mars, and Minerva was fast becoming a thing of the past.

When Christianity had become the religion of many people, it was necessary for the Church to have some form of organization; and such an organization speedily began to grow. First we find some of the Christians set aside to act as priests, and have charge of the services in the church. We find

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next among the priests in each city one who comes to be styled the “overseeing priest” or bishop, whose duty it was to look after the affairs of the churches in



BISHOP ON  
THRONE

his district. Gradually, too, the bishops in the more important cities come to have certain powers over the bishops of the smaller cities about them; these were then called “archbishops.” And finally, there came to be one out of the many hundred bishops of the Church who was looked up to more than any other person, and whose advice was sought in all important Church questions.

This was because he had charge of the church in Rome, the most important city of the Empire, and because he was believed to be the successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles. The name “Pope,” which means father, was given to him; and it was his duty to watch over all the affairs of the Church on earth, as a father watches over the affairs of his family.

Of course, all this organization did not spring up at once, ready made. Great things grow slowly; and so it was only slowly that this organization grew. Sometimes disputes arose as to the amount of power the priests should have over the “laymen,” as those who were priests were called; and sometimes there were disputes among the “clergy” or churchmen,

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themselves. Sometimes these disputes were about power, and lands, and things of that sort; for now the Church had become wealthy and powerful, through gifts made to it by rulers and pious laymen. More often the questions to be settled had to do with the belief of the Church,—that is, with the exact meaning of the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, as they are recorded in the Bible and in the writings of the early Christian teachers. Many of the questions which were discussed seem strange to us; but men were very much in earnest about them then. And at times, when a hard question arose concerning the belief of the Church, men would travel hundreds of miles to the great Church Councils or meetings where the matter was to be decided, and undergo hardships and sufferings without number, to see that the question was decided as they thought was right.

One of the questions which caused most trouble was brought forward by an Egyptian priest named Arius. He claimed that Christ the Son was not equal in power and glory to God the Father. Another Egyptian priest named Athanasius thought this was a wrong belief, or “heresy”; so he combated the belief of Arius in every way that he could. Soon the whole Christian world rang with the controversy. To settle the dispute the first great Council of the Church was called by the Emperor Constantine in the year 325 A.D. It met at Nicæa, a city in Asia Minor. There “Arianism” was condemned, and the teaching of Athanasius was declared to be the true belief of the Church. But this did not end the struggle. The followers of Arius would not give up,

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and for a while they were stronger than their opponents. Five times Athanasius was driven from his position of archbishop in Egypt, and for twenty years he was forced to live an exile from his native land. But he never faltered, and never ceased to write, preach, and argue for the belief which the Council had declared to be the true one. Even after Arius and Athanasius were both dead, the quarrel still went on. Indeed, it was nearly two hundred years before the last of the "Arians" gave up their view of the matter; but in the end the teachings of Athanasius became the belief of the whole Church.

One consequence of this dispute about Arianism was that the churches in the East and West began to drift apart. The Western churches followed the lead of the bishop of Rome and supported Athanasius in the struggle, while the Eastern churches for a time supported Arius. Even after Arianism had been given up, a quarrel still existed concerning the relation of the Holy Ghost to the Father and Son. As time went on, still other disputes arose between the East and West. The Roman clergy shaved their faces and were not permitted to marry, while the Greek clergy let their beards grow, and married and had children. Moreover Rome and Constantinople could not agree as to whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the Lord's Supper. Still less could the great bishop of Constantinople, where the Emperor held his court, admit that the power of the bishop of Rome was above his own. Each side looked with contempt and distrust upon the other; for the one were Greeks and

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the other Latins, and the differences of race and language made it difficult for them to understand one another.

Gradually the breach grew wider and wider. At last, after many, many years of ill feeling, the two churches broke off all relations. After that there was always a Greek Catholic Church (which exists to this day) as well as a Roman one; and the power of the Pope was acknowledged only by the churches in the Western or Latin half of the world.

The Church, of course, was as much changed by the conquests of the Germans as was the rest of the Roman world. The barbarians who settled in the lands of the Empire had already become Christians, for the most part, before the conquest, but they were still ignorant barbarians. Worst of all, the views which they had been taught at first were those held by the Arians; and this made them more feared and hated by the Roman Christians. Among the citizens of the Empire, as well as



A MONK

among the barbarians, there was also much wickedness, oppression, and unfair dealing. "The world is full of confusion," wrote one holy man. "No one trusts any one; each man is afraid of his neighbor. Many are the fleeces beneath which are concealed innumerable wolves, so that one might

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live more safely among enemies than among those who appear to be friends.”

The result of this was that man began to turn from the world to God. Many went out into the deserts of Egypt, and other waste and solitary places, and became hermits. There they lived, clothed in rags or the skins of wild beasts, and eating the coarsest food, in order that they might escape from the temptations of the world. The more they punished their bodies, the more they thought it helped their souls; so all sorts of strange deeds were performed by them. Perhaps the strangest case of all was that of a man named Simeon, who was called “Stylites,” from the way in which he lived. For thirty years,—day and night, summer and winter,—he dwelt on the top of a high pillar, so narrow that there was barely room for him to lie down. There for hours at a time he would stand praying, with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross; or else he would pass hours bowing his wasted body rapidly from his forehead to his feet, until at times the people who stood by counted a thousand bows without a single stop.

Such things as these happened more frequently in the Eastern than they did in the Western Church. In the West, men were more practical, and when they wished to flee from the world, they went into waste places and founded “monasteries,” where the “monks,” as they were called, dwelt together under the rule of an abbot. In the West, too, the power of the bishop of Rome became much greater than that possessed in the East by the bishop of

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Constantinople. It was because the Pope was already the leading man in Rome that Leo went out to meet the Huns and the Vandals, and tried to save Rome from them. About one hundred and forty years later, Pope Gregory the Great occupied even a higher position. He not only had charge of the churches near Rome, and was looked up to by the churches of Gaul, Spain and Africa more than Leo had been; but he also ruled the land about Rome much as an emperor or king ruled his kingdom.

Gregory was born of a noble and wealthy Roman family. When he inherited his fortune he gave it all to found seven monasteries, and he himself became a monk in one of these. There he lived a severe and studious life. At length, against his own wishes, he was chosen by the clergy and people to be Pope. This was in the very midst of the Dark Ages. The Lombards had just come into Italy, and everything was in confusion. Everywhere cities were ruined, churches burned, and monasteries destroyed. Farms were laid waste and left uncultivated; and wild beasts roamed over the deserted fields. For twenty-seven years, Gregory wrote, Rome had been in terror of the sword of the Lombards. "What is happening in other countries," he said, "we know not; but in this the end of the world seems not only to be approaching, but to have actually begun." The rulers that the Eastern Emperors set up in Italy, after it had been recovered from the East-Goths, either could not or would not help. And to make matters worse, famine and sickness came, and the people died by hundreds.

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So Gregory was obliged to act not only as the bishop of Rome, but as its ruler also. He caused processions to march about the city, and prayers to be said, to stop the sickness. He caused grain to be brought and given to the people, so that they might no longer die of famine. He also defended the city against the Lombards, until a peace could be made. In this way a beginning was made of the rule of the Pope over Rome, which did not come to an end until the year 1871.

Gregory was not only bishop of Rome, and ruler of the city. He was also the head of the whole Western Church, and was constantly busy with its affairs.

Before he was chosen Pope, Gregory was passing through the market-place at Rome, one day, and came to the spot where slaves—white slaves—were sold. There he saw some beautiful, fair-haired boys.

“From what country do these boys come?” he asked.

“From the island of Britain,” was the answer.

“Are they Christians?”

“No,” he was told; “they are still pagans.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Gregory, “that the Prince of Darkness should have power over forms of such loveliness.”

Then he asked of what nation they were.

“They are Angles,” replied their owner.

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“Truly,” said Gregory, “they seem like angels, not Angles. From what province of Britain are they?”

“From Deira,” said the man naming a kingdom in the northern part of the island.

“Then,” said Gregory, making a pun in the Latin, “they must be rescued *de ira* [from the wrath of God]. And what is the name of their king?”

“Ælla,” was the answer.

“Yea,” said Gregory, as he turned to go, “Alleluia must be sung in the land of Ælla.”

At first Gregory planned to go himself as missionary to convert the Angles and Saxons. In this he was disappointed; but when he became Pope he sent a monk named Augustine as leader of a band of missionaries. By their preaching, Christianity was introduced into the English kingdoms, and the English were gradually won from the old German worship of Woden and Thor.

Gregory also had an important part in winning the West-Goths and Lombards from Arianism to the true faith. In all that he did Gregory’s action seemed so wise and good that men said he was counselled by the Holy Spirit; and in the pictures of him the Holy Spirit is always represented, in the form of a dove, hovering about his head.

Gregory has been called the real father of the Papacy of the Middle Ages. This is no small praise, for the Papacy, in those dark ages, was of great service to Christendom. In later ages, popes

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sometimes became corrupt; and at last the Reformation came, in which many nations of the West threw off their obedience. But in the dark days of the Middle Ages, all the Western nations looked up to the Pope as the head of the Church on earth, and the influence of the popes was for good. There was very little order, union, and love for right and justice in the Middle Ages, as it was; but no one can imagine how much greater would have been the confusion, the lawlessness, and the disorder without the restraining influence of the Papacy.