undying empire in the deathless world of fiction, he was the Haroun-al-Raschid of the *Arabian Nights*.

Sir Mark Sykes[1] gives an account of the reality of his empire from which we will quote certain passages. He says: "The Imperial Court was polished, luxurious, and unlimitedly wealthy; the capital, Bagdad, a gigantic mercantile city surrounding a huge administrative fortress, wherein every department of state had a properly regulated and well-ordered public office; where schools and colleges abounded; whither philosophers, students, doctors, poets, and theologians flocked from all parts of the civilized globe. . . . The provincial capitals were embellished with vast public buildings, and linked together by an effective and rapid service of posts and caravans; the frontiers were secure and well garrisoned, the army loyal, efficient, and brave; the governors and ministers honest and forbearing. The empire stretched with equal strength and unimpaired control from the Cilician gates to Aden, and from Egypt to Central Asia. Christians, Pagans, Jews, as well as Moslems, were employed in the government service. Usurpers, rebellious generals, and false prophets seemed to have vanished from the Moslem dominions. Traffic and wealth had taken the place of revolution and famine. . . . Pestilence and disease were met by Imperial hospitals and government physicians. . . . In government business the rough-and-ready methods of Arabian administration had given place to a complicated system of Divans, initiated partly from the Roman, but chiefly taken from the Persian system of government. Posts, Finance, Privy Seal, Crown Lands, Justice, and Military Affairs were each administered by separate bureaux in the hands of ministers and officials; an army of clerks, scribes, writers and accountants swarmed into these offices and gradually swept the whole power of the government into their own hands by separating the Commander of the Faithful from any direct intercourse with his subjects. The Imperial Palace and the entourage were equally based on Roman and Persian precedents. Eunuchs, closely veiled 'harems' of women, guards, spies, go-betweens, jesters, poets, and dwarfs clustered around the person of the Commander of the Faithful, each, in his degree, endeavouring to gain the royal favour and indirectly distracting the royal mind from affairs of business and state. Meanwhile the mercantile trade of the East poured gold into Bagdad, and supplemented the other enormous stream of money derived from the contributions of plunder and loot despatched to the capital by the commanders of the victorious

[1] *The Caliph's Last Heritage.*

raiding forces which harried Asia Minor, India, and Turkestan. The seemingly unending supply of Turkish slaves and Byzantine specie added to the richness of the revenues of Irak and, combined with the vast commercial traffic of which Bagdad was the centre, produced a large and powerful moneyed class, composed of the sons of generals, officials, landed proprietors, royal favourites, merchants, and the like, who encouraged the arts, literature, philosophy, and poetry as the mood took them, building palaces for themselves, vying with each other in the luxury of their entertainments, suborning poets to sound their praises, dabbling in philosophy, supporting various schools of thought, endowing charities, and, in fact, behaving as the wealthy have always behaved in all ages.

"I have said that the Abbasid Empire in the days of Haroun-al-Raschid was weak and feeble to a degree, and perhaps the reader will consider this a foolish proposition when he takes into consideration that I have described the Empire as orderly, the administration definite and settled, the army efficient, and wealth abundant. The reason I make the suggestion is that the Abbasid Empire had lost touch with everything original and vital in Islam, and was constructed entirely by the reunion of the fragments of the empires Islam had destroyed. There was nothing in the empire which appealed to the higher instinct of the leaders of the people; the holy war had degenerated into a systematic acquisition of plunder. The Caliph had become a luxurious Emperor or King of Kings; the administration had changed from a patriarchal system to a bureaucracy. The wealthier classes were rapidly losing all faith in the religion of the state; speculative philosophy and high living were taking the place of Koranic orthodoxy and Arabian simplicity. The solitary bond which could have held the empire together, the sternness and plainness of the Moslem faith, was completely neglected by both the Caliph and his advisers. . . . Haroun-al-Raschid himself was a wine-bibber, and his palace was decorated with graven images of birds and beasts and men. . . .

"For a moment we stand amazed at the greatness of the Abbasid dominion; then suddenly we realize that it is but as a fair husk enclosing the dust and ashes of dead civilizations."

Haroun-al-Raschid died in 809. At his death his great empire fell immediately into civil war and confusion, and the next great event of unusual importance in this region of the world comes two hundred years later when the Turks, under the chiefs of the great family of the Seljuks, poured southward out of Turkestan, and not only conquered the empire of Bagdad,

but Asia Minor also. Coming from the north-east as they did, they were able to outflank the great barrier of the Taurus Mountains, which had hitherto held back the Moslems. They were still much the same people as those of whom Yuan Chwang gave us a glimpse four hundred years earlier, but now they were Moslems, and Moslems of the primitive type, men whom Abu Bekr would have welcomed to Islam. They caused a great revival of vigour in Islam, and they turned the minds of the Moslem world once more in the direction of a religious war against Christendom. For there had been a sort of truce between these two great religions after the cessation of the Moslem advance and the decline of the Omayyads. Such warfare as had gone on between Christianity and Islam had been rather border-bickering than sustained war. It became only a bitter fanatical struggle again in the eleventh century.

§ 8

Arabic Culture.

But before we go on to tell of the Turks and the Crusaders, the great wars that began between Christendom and Islam, and which have left a quite insane intolerance between these great systems right down to the present time, it is necessary to give a little more attention to the intellectual life of the Arabic-speaking world which was now spreading more and more widely over the regions which Hellenism had once dominated. For some generations before Muhammad, the Arab mind had been, as it were, smouldering, it had been producing poetry and much religious discussion; under the stimulus of the national and racial successes, it presently blazed out with a brilliance second only to that of the Greeks during their best period. It revived the human pursuit of science. If the Greek was the father, then the Arab was the foster-father of the scientific method. Through the Arabs it was, and not by the Latin route, that the modern world received that gift of light and power.

But when we write Arab here, we must write it with a certain reservation. The Arabic culture of Islam has something of the same relation to the original Arab as the Hellenic culture after the days of Alexander had to the original European Greek. It was no longer racially pure. It had incorporated with it a group of pre-existing cultures, the Persian of the Arsacid dynasty, and the Coptic of Hellenized Egypt. Persia and Egypt learnt to talk Arabic with great promptitude, but they remained in quality Persia and Egypt.

The early conquests of the Arabs had brought the Arabic culture into close contact with the Greek literary tradition—not, it is true, in the original Greek, but through the Syrian translations of the Greek writers. The Nestorian Christians, the Christians to the east of orthodoxy, seem to have been much more intelligent and active-minded than the court theologians of Byzantium, and at a much higher level of general education than the Latin-speaking Christians of the west. They had been tolerated during the latter days of the Sassanids, and they were tolerated by Islam until the ascendancy of the Turks in the eleventh century. They were the intellectual backbone of the Persian world. They had preserved much of the Hellenic medical science, and had even added to it. In the Omayyad times most of the physicians in the Caliph's dominions were Nestorians, and no doubt many learned Nestorians professed Islam without any serious compunction or any great change in their work and thoughts. They had preserved much of Aristotle both in Greek and in Syrian translations. They had a considerable mathematical literature. Their equipment makes the contemporary resources of Saint Benedict or Cassiodorus seem very pitiful. To these Nestorian teachers came the fresh Arab mind out of the desert, keen and curious, and learnt much and improved upon its teaching. It learnt much and acquired much. Persia had been for many centuries a country of intense and subtle theological and speculative activity. These activities now clothed themselves in Arabic phrases and became a process of heresy and schism in the Moslem Church. The Shiite schism was essentially Persian.

But the Persians with the Hellenic learning were not the only teachers available for the Arabs. Throughout all the rich cities of the East the kindred Jews were scattered with their own distinctive literature and tradition, and the Arab and the Jewish mind reacted upon one another to a common benefit. The Arab was informed and the Jew sharpened to a keener edge. The Jews have never been pedants in the matter of their language; we have already noted that a thousand years before Islam they spoke Greek in Hellenized Alexandria, and now all over this new Moslem world they were speaking and writing Arabic. Some of the greatest of Jewish literature was written in Arabic, the religious writings of Maimonides, for example. Indeed, it is difficult to say, in the case of this Arabic culture, where the Jew ends and the Arab begins, so important and essential were its Jewish factors.

Moreover, there was a third source of inspiration, more

particularly in mathematical science, to which at present it is difficult to do justice—India. There can be little doubt that the Arab mind during its period of splendour was in close and effective contact with Sanskrit literature and with Indo-Persian physical science.

The distinctive activities of the Arab mind were already manifest under the Omayyads, although it was during the Abbasid time that it made its best display. History is the beginning and core of all sound philosophy and all great literature, and the first Arab writers of distinction were historians, biographers, and quasi-historical poets. Romantic fiction and the short story followed as a reading public developed, willing to be amused. And as reading ceased to be a special accomplishment, and became necessary to every man of affairs and to every youth of breeding, came the systematic growth of an educational system and an educational literature. By the ninth and tenth centuries there are not only grammars but great lexicons, and a mass of philological learning in Islam.

And a century or so in advance of the West, there grew up in the Moslem world at a number of centres, at Basra, at Kufa, at Bagdad and Cairo, and at Cordoba, out of what were at first religious schools dependent upon mosques, a series of great universities. The light of these universities shone far beyond the Moslem world, and drew students to them from east and west. At Cordoba in particular there were great numbers of Christian students, and the influence of Arab philosophy coming by way of Spain upon the universities of Paris, Oxford, and North Italy, and upon Western European thought generally, was very considerable indeed. The name of Averroes (Ibnrushd) of Cordoba (1126–1198) stands out as that of the culminating influence of Arab philosophy upon European thought. He developed the teachings of Aristotle upon lines that made a sharp division between religious and scientific truth, and so prepared the way for the liberation of scientific research from the theological dogmatism that restrained it both under Christianity and under Islam. Another great name is that of Avicenna (Ibnsinā), the Prince of Physicians (980–1037), who was born at the other end of the Arabic world at Bokhara, and who travelled in Khorasan. . . . The book-copying industry flourished at Alexandria, Damascus, Cairo, and Bagdad, and about the year 970 there were twenty-seven free schools open in Cordoba for the education of the poor.

"In mathematics," say Thatcher and Schwill,[1] "the Arabs

[1] *A General History of Europe.*

built on the foundations of the Greek mathematicians. The origin of the so-called Arabic numerals is obscure. Under Theodoric the Great, Boëthius made use of certain signs which were in part very like the nine digits which we now use." One of the pupils of Gerbert also used signs which were still more like ours; but the zero, it is stated, was unknown until the twelfth century, when it was invented by an Arab mathematician named Muhammad-Ibn-Musa, who also was the first to use the decimal notation, and who gave the digits the value of position. This, however, is disputed by many Indians, who claim the zero and the decimal system as a distinctly Indian contribution.

"In geometry the Arabs did not add much to Euclid, but algebra is practically their creation; also, they developed spherical trigonometry, inventing the sine, tangent, and cotangent. In physics they invented the pendulum, and produced works on optics. They made progress in the science of astronomy. They built several observatories, and constructed many astronomical instruments which are still in use. They calculated the angle of the ecliptic and the precession of the equinoxes. Their knowledge of astronomy was undoubtedly considerable.

"In medicine they made great advances over the work of the Greeks. They studied physiology and hygiene, and their *materia medica* was practically the same as ours to-day. Many of their methods of treatment are still in use among us. Their surgeons understood the use of anæsthetics, and performed some of the most difficult operations known. At the time when in Europe the practice of medicine was forbidden by the Church, which expected cures to be effected by religious rites performed by the clergy, the Arabs had a real science of medicine.

"In chemistry they made a good beginning. They discovered many new substances, such as potash, nitrate of silver, corrosive sublimate, and nitric and sulphuric acid." The word "alcohol" is Arabic, though the substance was known under the name of "spirits of wine" to Pliny (A.D. 100). ". . . In manufactures they outdid the world in variety and beauty of design and perfection of workmanship. They worked in all the metals—gold, silver, copper, bronze, iron and steel. In textile fabrics they have never been surpassed. They made glass and pottery of the finest quality. They knew the secrets of dyeing, and they manufactured paper. They had many processes of dressing leather, and their work was famous throughout Europe. They made tinctures, essences and syrups. They made sugar from the cane, and grew many fine kinds of wine. They practised farming in a scientific way, and had good systems of irrigation. They

knew the value of fertilizers, and adapted their crops to the quality of the ground. They excelled in horticulture, knowing how to graft and how to produce new varieties of fruit and flowers. They introduced into the West many trees and plants from the East, and wrote scientific treatises on farming."

One item in this account must be underlined here because of its importance in the intellectual life of mankind, the manufacture of paper. This the Arabs seemed to have learnt from the Chinese by way of Central Asia. The Europeans acquired it from the Arabs. Until that time books had to be written upon parchment or papyrus, and after the Arab conquest of Egypt Europe was cut off from the papyrus supply. Until paper became abundant, the art of printing was of little use, and newspapers and popular education by means of books was impossible. This was probably a much more important factor in the relative backwardness of Europe during the dark ages than historians seem disposed to admit. . . .

And all this mental life went on in the Moslem world in spite of a very considerable amount of political disorder. From first to last the Arabs never grappled with the problem, the still unsolved problem, of the stable progressive state; everywhere their form of government was absolutist and subject to the convulsions, changes, intrigues, and murders that have always characterized the extremer forms of monarchy. But for some centuries, beneath the crimes and rivalries of courts and camps, the spirit of Islam did preserve a certain general decency and restraint in life; the Byzantine Empire was impotent to shatter this civilization, and the Turkish danger in the north-east gathered strength only very slowly. Until the Turk fell upon it, the intellectual life of Islam continued. Perhaps it secretly flattered itself that it would always be able to go on, in spite of the thread of violence and unreason in its political direction. Hitherto, in all countries, that has been the characteristic attitude of science and literature. The intellectual man has been loth to come to grips with the forcible man. He has generally been something of a courtier and time-server. Possibly he has never yet been quite sure of himself. Hitherto men of reason and knowledge have never had the assurance and courage of the religious fanatic. But there can be little doubt that they have accumulated settled convictions and gathered confidence during the last few centuries; they have slowly found a means to power through the development of popular education and popular literature, and to-day they are far more disposed to say things plainly and to claim a dominating voice in the organiza-

tion of human affairs than they have ever been before in the world's history.

§ 9

Arabic Art.

The Moslem conquests are associated with new types of architecture, called variously Saracenic, Mohammedan and Arabic. But the true Arab, says Gayet, was never an artist. He built, because he had to build, mosques, palaces, tombs, cities, but he found his workmen and architects among the Egyptians, Syrians, and Persians he had conquered. Arabic art in Persia was a mere continuation of Persian art, but in Egypt and Syria there was a real adaptation to new conditions and a new type and character of building and decoration appeared. This was "Arab" art strictly speaking. To the west in North Africa and Spain was developed a special variation characterized by the horseshoe arch. Syria and Egypt, long before the coming of the Arabs, had diverged from Byzantine forms by replacing the round arch by the pointed arch, and had gone far beyond Byzantine art in the disuse of modelled forms. For Hellenic realism they were substituting patterning, and the Arab temperament, contemplative and ecstatic, was all for enhancing this process. "Not to obey a religious precept," says Gayet—for there are many early Arab representative paintings—"but through an instinct." In the common matters of life, and apart from any culture, the Arab displays an extreme disinclination to strip his body or look upon a body. Gradually in the evolution of Arab art the decoration passes from conventionalized animal and vegetable forms to geometrical interlacings, "arabesques." Roofs and vaults become more and more deeply encrusted, pierced screens multiply, and even the outward form becomes polyhedral. The vaults are covered with circular and polygonal studs which descend at last like stalactites. A new mysterious beauty is produced by these suppressions and sublimations, like the beauty of crystals and ripples and the subtle and obscure rhythms of inanimate things, a beauty diametrically opposed to the unrestricted freedoms, the glorious vulgarities, the exuberant vitality, of Hellenic art.

Associated in our minds with these structural developments as characteristically Arabic are the minaret and the bulbous cupola, and a brilliant use of glazed and often richly ornamented tiles. An enormous use is made in decoration of texts and phrases from the Koran in the beautiful sweeping Arabic writing.

CHAPTER 31

CHRISTENDOM AND THE CRUSADES

§ 1

LET us turn again now from this intellectual renascence in the cradle of the ancient civilizations to the affairs of the Western world.

We have described the complete economic, social, and political break-up of the Roman imperial system in the West, the confusion and darkness that followed in the sixth and seventh centuries, and the struggles of such men as Cassiodorus to keep alight the flame of human learning amidst these windy confusions. For a time it would be idle to write of states and rulers. Smaller or greater adventurers seized a castle or a countryside and ruled an uncertain area. The British Islands, for instance, were split up amidst a multitude of rulers; and numerous Keltic chiefs in Ireland and Scotland and Wales and Cornwall fought and prevailed over and succumbed to each other: the English invaders were also divided into a number of fluctuating "kingdoms," Kent, Wessex, Essex, Sussex, Mercia, Northumbria and East Anglia, which were constantly at war with one another.

So it was over most of the Western world. Here a bishop would be the monarch, as Gregory the Great was in Rome; here a town or a group of towns would be under the rule of the duke or prince of this or that. Amidst the vast ruins of the city of Rome, half-independent families of quasi-noble adventurers and their retainers maintained themselves. The Pope kept a sort of general predominance there, but he was sometimes more than balanced by a "Duke of Rome." The great arena of the Colosseum had been made into a privately-owned castle, and so, too, had the vast circular tomb of the Emperor Hadrian; and the adventurers who had possession of these strongholds and their partisans waylaid each other and fought and bickered in the ruinous streets of the once imperial city. The Tomb of Hadrian was known after the days of Gregory the Great as the Castle of St. Angelo, the Castle of the Holy Angel, because, when he was crossing the bridge over the Tiber, on his way to St. Peter's to pray against the great pestilence which was devastating the city, he had had a vision of a great angel standing over the dark mass of the mausoleum and sheathing a sword, and he had known then that his prayers would be answered. This Castle of St. Angelo played a very important part in Roman affairs during this age of disorder.

Spain was in much the same state of political fragmentation as Italy or France or Britain; and in Spain the old feud of Carthaginian and Roman was still continued in the bitter hostility of their descendants and heirs, the Jew and the Christian. So that when the power of the Caliph had swept along the North African coast to the Straits of Gibraltar, it found in the Spanish Jews ready helpers in its invasion of Europe. A Moslem army of Arabs and of Berbers, the nomadic Hamitic people of the African desert and mountain hinterland who had been converted to Islam, crossed and defeated the West Goths in a great battle in 711. In a few years the whole country was in their possession.

In 720 Islam had reached the Pyrenees, and had pushed round their eastern end into France; and for a time it seemed that the faith was likely to subjugate Gaul as easily as it had subjugated the Spanish peninsula. But presently it struck against something hard, a new kingdom of the Franks, which had been consolidating itself for some two centuries in the Rhineland and North France.

Of this Frankish kingdom, the precursor of France and Germany, which formed the western bulwark of Europe against the faith of Muhammad, as the Byzantine Empire behind the

Taurus Mountains formed the eastern, we shall now have much to tell; but first we must give some account of the new system of social groupings out of which it arose.

§ 2

The Feudal System.

It is necessary that the reader should have a definite idea of the social condition of Western Europe in the eighth century. It was not a barbarism. Eastern Europe was still barbaric and savage; things had progressed but little beyond the state of affairs described by Gibbon in his account of the mission of Priscus to Attila (see ch. 27, § 6). But Western Europe was a shattered civilization without law, without administration, with roads destroyed and education disorganized, but still with great numbers of people with civilized ideas and habits and traditions.

It was a time of confusion, of brigandage, of crimes unpunished and universal insecurity. It is very interesting to trace how, out of the universal mêlée, the beginnings of a new order appeared. In a modern breakdown there would probably be the formation of local vigilance societies, which would combine and restore a police administration and a roughly democratic rule. But in the broken-down Western Empire of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, men's ideas turned rather to leaders than to committees, and the centres about which affairs crystallized were here barbaric chiefs, here a vigorous bishop or some surviving claimant to a Roman official position, here a long-recognized landowner or man of ancient family, and here again some vigorous usurper of power. No solitary man was safe.

So men were forced to link themselves with others, preferably people stronger than themselves. The lonely man chose the most powerful and active person in his district and became *his* man. The freeman or the weak lordling of a petty territory linked himself to some more powerful lord. The protection of that lord (or the danger of his hostility) became more considerable with every such accession. So very rapidly there went on a process of political crystallization in the confused and lawless sea into which the Western Empire had liquefied. These natural associations and alliances of protector and subordinates grew very rapidly into a sort of system, *the feudal system*, traces of which are still to be found in the social structure of every European community west of Russia. It varied enormously in its manifestations.

This process speedily took on technical forms and laws of its own. In such a country as Gaul it was already well in progress in the days of insecurity *before* the barbarian tribes broke into the empire as conquerors. The Franks when they came into Gaul brought with them an institution, which we have already noted in the case of the Macedonians, and which was probably of very wide distribution among the Nordic people, the gathering about the chief or war king of a body of young men of good family, the companions or *comitatus*, his counts or captains. It was natural in the case of invading peoples that the relations of a weak lord to a strong lord should take on the relations of a count to his king, and that a conquering chief should divide seized and confiscated estates among his companions. From the side of the decaying empire there came to feudalism the idea of the grouping for mutual protection of men and estates; from the Teutonic side came the notions of knightly association, devotion, and personal service. The former was the economic side of the institution, the latter the chivalrous.

The analogy of the aggregation of feudal groupings with crystallization is a very close one. As the historian watches the whirling and eddying confusion of the fourth and fifth centuries in Western Europe, he begins to perceive the appearance of these pyramidal growths of heads and subordinates and sub-subordinates, which jostle against one another, branch, dissolve again, or coalesce. "We use the term 'feudal system' for convenience' sake, but with a degree of impropriety if it conveys the meaning 'systematic.' Feudalism in its most flourishing age was anything but systematic. It was confusion roughly organized. Great diversity prevailed everywhere, and we should not be surprised to find some different fact or custom in every lordship. Anglo-Norman feudalism attained in the eleventh and twelfth centuries a logical completeness and a uniformity of practice which, in the feudal age proper, can hardly be found elsewhere through so large a territory. . . .

"The foundation of the feudal relationship proper was the *fief*, which was usually land, but might be any desirable thing, as an office, a revenue in money or kind, the right to collect a toll, or operate a mill. In return for the fief, the man became the *vassal* of his lord; he knelt before him, and, with his hands between his lord's hands, promised him fealty and service. . . . The faithful performance of all the duties he had assumed in homage constituted the vassal's right and title to his fief. So long as they were fulfilled, he, and his heir after him, held the fief as his property, practically and in relation to all under-

tenants as if he were the owner. In the ceremony of homage and investiture, which is the creative contract of feudalism, the obligations assumed by the two parties were, as a rule, not specified in exact terms. They were determined by local custom. . . . In many points of detail the vassal's services differed widely in different parts of the feudal world. We may say, however, that they fall into two classes, general and specific. The general

included all that might come under the idea of loyalty, seeking the lord's interests, keeping his secrets, betraying the plans of his enemies, protecting his family, etc. The specific services are capable of more definite statement, and they usually received exact definition in custom and sometimes in written documents. The most characteristic of these was the military service, which included appearance in the field on summons with a certain force, often armed in a specified way, and remaining a specified length of time. It often included, also, the duty of guarding the lord's castle, and of holding one's own castle subject to the plans of the lord for the defence of his fief. . . . Theoretically

regarded, feudalism covered Europe with a network of these fiefs, rising in graded ranks one above the other from the smallest, the knight's fee, at the bottom, to the king at the top, who was the supreme landowner, or who held the kingdom from God. . . ."[1]

But this was the theory that was superimposed upon the established facts. The reality of feudalism was its voluntary co-operation.

"The feudal state was one in which, it has been said, private law had usurped the place of public law." But rather is it truer that public law had failed and vanished and private law had come in to fill the vacuum. Public duty had become private obligation.

§ 3

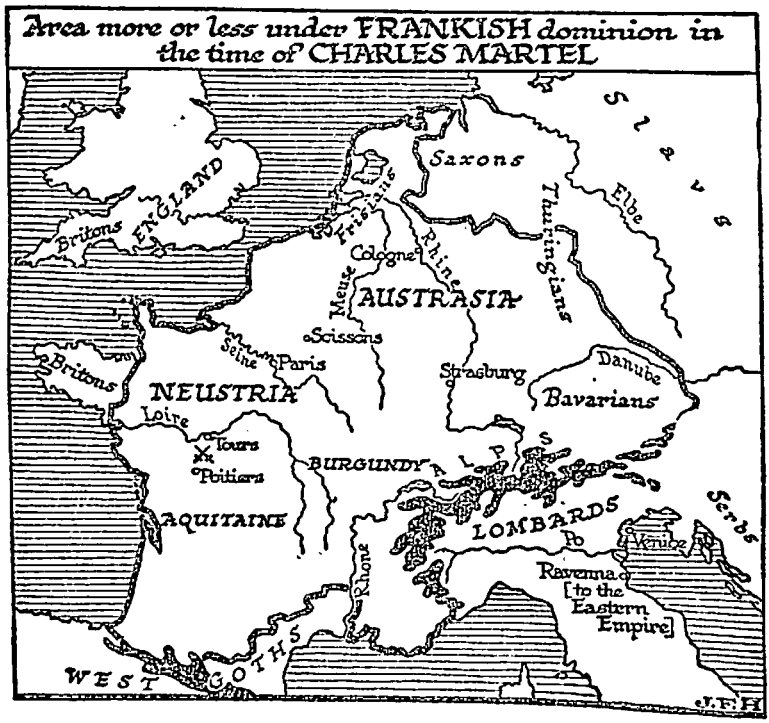
The Frankish Kingdom of the Merovingians.

We have already mentioned various kingdoms of the barbarian tribes who set up a more or less flimsy dominion over this or that area amidst the debris of the empire, the kingdoms of the Suevi and West Goths in Spain, the East-Gothic kingdom in Italy, and the Italian Lombard kingdom which succeeded the Goths after Justinian had expelled the latter and after the great pestilence had devastated Italy.

The Frankish kingdom was another such barbarian power which arose first in what is now Belgium, and which spread southward to the Loire, but it developed far more strength and solidarity than any of the others. It was the first real state to emerge from the universal wreckage. It became at last a wide and vigorous political reality, and from it are derived two great powers of modern Europe, France and the German Empire. Its founder was Clovis (481–511), who began as a small king in Belgium and ended with his southern frontiers nearly at the Pyrenees. He divided his kingdom among his four sons, but the Franks retained a tradition of unity in spite of this division, and for a time fraternal wars for a single control united rather than divided them. A more serious split arose, however, through the Latinization of the Western Franks, who occupied Romanized Gaul and who learnt to speak the corrupt Latin of the subject population, while the Franks of the Rhineland retained their Low German speech. At a low level of civilization, differences in language cause very powerful political strains. For a hundred

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica* Twelfth Edition, article "Feudalism," by Professor G. B. Adams.

and fifty years the Frankish world was split in two, Neustria, the nucleus of France, speaking a Latinish speech, which became at last the French language we know, and Austrasia, the Rhineland, which remained German. The Franks differed from the Swabians and South Germans, and came much nearer the Anglo-Saxons in that they spoke a "Low German" and not a "High German" dialect. Their language resembled Plattdeutsch



and Anglo-Saxon, and was the direct parent of Dutch and Flemish. In fact, the Franks where they were not Latinized became Flemings and "Dutchmen" of South Holland (North Holland is still Friesisch—i.e. Anglo-Saxon). The "French" which the Latinized Franks and Burgundians spoke in the seventh to the tenth centuries was remarkably like the Rumansch language of Switzerland, judging from the vestiges that remain in old documents.

We will not tell here of the decay of the dynasty, the Merovingian dynasty, founded by Clovis; nor how in Austrasia a certain court official, the Mayor of the Palace, gradually became the king *de facto* and used the real king as a puppet. The position

of Mayor of the Palace also became hereditary in the seventh century, and in 687 a certain Pepin of Heristhal, the Austrasian Mayor of the Palace, had conquered Neustria and reunited all the Franks. He was followed in 721 by his son, Charles Martel, who also bore no higher title than Mayor of the Palace. (His poor little Merovingian kings do not matter in the slightest degree to us here.) It was this Charles Martel who stopped the Moslems. They had pushed as far as Tours when he met them, and in a great battle between that place and Poitiers (732) utterly defeated them and broke their spirit. Thereafter the Pyrenees remained their utmost boundary; they came no further into Western Europe.

Charles Martel divided his power between two sons, but one resigned and went into a monastery, leaving his brother Pepin sole ruler. This Pepin it was who finally extinguished the descendants of Clovis. He sent to the Pope to ask who was the true king of the Franks, the man who held the power or the man who wore the crown; and the Pope, who was in need of a supporter, decided in favour of the Mayor of the Palace. So Pepin was chosen king at a gathering of the Frankish nobles in the Merovingian capital, Soissons, and anointed and crowned. That was in 751. The Franco-Germany he united was consolidated by his son Charlemagne. It held together until the death of his grandson Louis (840), and then France and Germany broke away again—to the great injury of mankind. It was not a difference of race or temperament, it was a difference of language and tradition that split these Frankish peoples asunder.

That old separation of Neustria and Austrasia still works out in bitter consequences. In 1916 the ancient conflict of Neustria and Austrasia had broken out into war once more. In the August of that year the present writer visited Soissons, and crossed the temporary wooden bridge that had been built by the English after the battle of the Aisne from the main part of the town to the suburb of Saint Médard. Canvas screens protected passengers upon the bridge from the observation of the German sharpshooters who were sniping from their trenches down the curve of the river. He went with his guides across a field and along by the wall of an orchard in which a German shell exploded as he passed. So he reached the battered buildings that stand upon the site of the ancient Abbey of St. Médard, in which the last Merovingian was deposed and Pepin the Short was crowned in his stead. Beneath these ancient buildings there were great crypts, very useful as dug-outs—for the German advanced lines were not more than a couple of hundred yards

away. The sturdy French soldier lads were cooking and resting in these shelters, and lying down to sleep among the stone coffins that had held the bones of their Merovingian kings.

§ 4

The Christianization of the Western Barbarians.

The populations over which Charles Martel and King Pepin ruled were at very different levels of civilization in different districts. To the west and south the bulk of the people consisted of Latinized and Christian Kelts; in the central regions these rulers had to deal with such more or less Christianized Germans as the Franks and Burgundians and Alemanni; to the north-east were still pagan Frisians and Saxons; to the east were the Bavarians, recently Christianized through the activities of St. Boniface, and to the east of them again pagan Slavs and Avars. The "paganism" of the Germans and Slavs was very similar to the primitive religion of the Greeks; it was a manly religion in which temple, priest, and sacrifices played a small part, and its gods were like men, a kind of "school prefects" of more powerful beings who interfered impulsively and irregularly in human affairs. The Germans had a Jupiter in Odin, a Mars in Thor, a Venus in Freya, and so on. Throughout the seventh and eighth centuries a steady process of conversion to Christianity went on amidst these German and Slavonic tribes.

It will be interesting to English-speaking readers to note that the most zealous and successful missionaries among the Saxons and Frisians came from England. Christianity was twice planted in the British Isles. It was already there while Britain was a part of the Roman Empire; a martyr, St. Alban, gave his name to the town of St. Albans, and nearly every visitor to Canterbury has also visited little old St. Martin's Church which was used during the Roman times. From Britain, as we have already said, Christianity spread beyond the imperial boundaries into Ireland—the chief missionary was St. Patrick —and there was a vigorous monastic movement with which are connected the names of St. Columba and the religious settlements of Iona. Then in the fifth and sixth centuries came the fierce and pagan English, and they cut off the early Church of Ireland from the main body of Christianity. In the seventh century Christian missionaries were converting the English, both in the north from Ireland and in the south from Rome. The Rome mission was sent by Pope Gregory the Great just at the close of the sixth century. The story goes that he saw

English boys for sale in the Roman slave market, though it is a little difficult to understand how they got there. They were very fair and good-looking. In answer to his inquiries, he was told that they were Angles. "Not Angles, but Angels," said he, "had they but the gospel."

The mission worked through the seventh century. Before that century was over, most of the English were Christians; though Mercia, the central English kingdom, held out stoutly against the priests and for the ancient faith and ways. And there was a swift progress in learning upon the part of these new converts. The monasteries of the kingdom of Northumbria in the north of England became a centre of light and learning. Theodore of Tarsus was one of the earliest archbishops of Canterbury (668–690). "While Greek was utterly unknown in the west of Europe, it was mastered by some of the pupils of Theodore. The monasteries contained many monks who were excellent scholars. Most famous of all was Bede, known as the Venerable Bede (673–735), a monk of Jarrow (on Tyne). He had for his pupils the six hundred monks of that monastery, besides the many strangers who came to hear him. He gradually mastered all the learning of his day, and left at his death forty-five volumes of his writings, the most important of which are 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English' and his translation of the Gospel of John into English. His writings were widely known and used throughout Europe. He reckoned all dates from the birth of Christ, and through his works the use of Christian chronology became common in Europe. Owing to the large number of monasteries and monks in Northumbria that part of England was for a time far in advance of the south in civilization."[1]

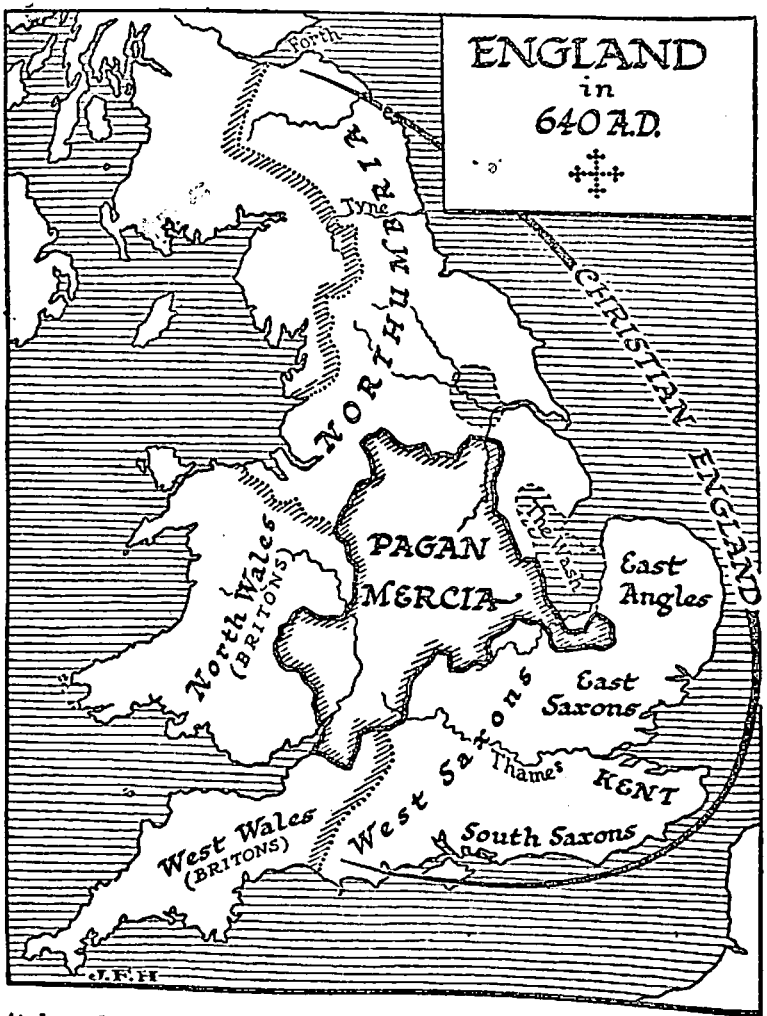
In the seventh and eighth centuries we find the English missionaries active upon the eastern frontiers of the Frankish kingdom. Chief among these was St. Boniface (680–755), who was born at Crediton, in Devonshire, who converted the Frisians, Thuringians, and Hessians, and who was martyred in Holland.

Both in England and on the Continent the ascendant rulers seized upon Christianity as a unifying force to cement their conquests. Christianity became a banner for aggressive chiefs —as it did in Uganda in Africa in the bloody days before that country was annexed to the British Empire.

After Pepin, who died in 768, came two sons, Charles and another, who divided his kingdom; but the brother of Charles died in 771, and Charles then became sole king (771–814) of the

[1] *A General History of Europe*, Thatcher and Schwill.

growing realm of the Franks. This Charles is known in history as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne. As in the case of Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar, posterity has enormously exaggerated his memory. He made his wars of aggression de-



finitely religious wars. All the world of North-western Europe which is now Great Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, and Norway and Sweden, was in the ninth century an arena of bitter conflict between the old faith and the new. Whole nations were converted to Christianity by the sword, just as Islam in

Arabia, Central Asia, and Africa had converted whole nations a century or so before.

With fire and sword Charlemagne preached the Gospel of the Cross to the Saxons, Bohemians, and as far as the Danube into what is now Hungary; he carried the same teaching down the Adriatic coast, through what is now Dalmatia, and drove the Moslems back from the Pyrenees as far as Barcelona.

Moreover, he it was who sheltered Egbert, an exile from Wessex, in England, and assisted him presently to establish himself as king in Wessex (802). Egbert subdued the Britons in Cornwall, as Charlemagne conquered the Britons of Brittany, and, by a series of wars, which he continued after the death of his Frankish patron, made himself at last the first King of all England (828).

But the attacks of Charlemagne upon the last strongholds of paganism provoked a vigorous reaction on the part of the unconverted. The Christianized English had retained very little of the seamanship that had brought them from the mainland, and the Franks had not yet become seamen. As the Christian propaganda of Charlemagne swept towards the shores of the North and Baltic Seas, the pagans were driven to the sea. They retaliated for the Christian persecutions with plundering raids and expeditions against the northern coasts of France and against Christian England.

These pagan Saxons and English of the mainland and their kindred from Denmark and Norway are the Danes and Northmen of our national histories. They were also called Vikings,[1] which means "inletmen," because they came from the deep inlets of the Scandinavian coast. They came in long black galleys, making little use of sails. Most of our information about these wars and invasions of the pagan Vikings is derived from Christian sources, and so we have abundant information of the massacres and atrocities of their raids and very little about the cruelties inflicted upon their pagan brethren, the Saxons, at the hands of Charlemagne. Their animus against the Cross and against monks and nuns was extreme. They delighted in the burning of monasteries and nunneries and the slaughter of their inmates.

Throughout the period between the fifth and the ninth centuries these Vikings or Northmen were learning seamanship, becoming bolder, and ranging further. They braved the northern seas until the icy shores of Greenland were a familiar haunt, and by the ninth century they had settlements (of which Europe

[1] N.B.—Vik-ings, not Vi-kings: Vik = a fiord or inlet.