

adherents of his rival, so that by one standard or another all Christendom was damned soundly and completely during this time (1378-1417).

The lamentable effect of this split upon the solidarity of Christendom it is impossible to exaggerate. Is it any marvel that such men as Wycliffe began to teach men to think on their own account, when the fountain of truth thus squirted against itself?

In 1417 the Great Schism was healed at the Council of Constance, the same council that dug up and burnt Wycliffe's bones, and which, as we shall tell later, caused the burning of John Huss; at this council, Pope and anti-Pope resigned or were swept aside, and Martin V became the sole Pope of a formally reunited but spiritually very badly strained Christendom.

How, later on, the Council of Basel (1439) led to a fresh schism, and to further anti-Popes, we cannot relate here.

Such, briefly, is the story of the great centuries of papal ascendancy and papal decline. It is the story of the failure to achieve the very noble and splendid idea of a unified and religious world. We have pointed out in the previous section how greatly the inheritance of a complex dogmatic theology encumbered the church in this its ambitious adventure. It had too much theology, and not enough religion. But it may not be idle to point out here how much the individual insufficiency of the Popes also contributed to the collapse of its scheme and dignity. There was no such level of education in the world as to provide a succession of cardinals and popes with the breadth of knowledge and outlook needed for the task they had undertaken; they were not sufficiently educated for their task, and only a few, by sheer force of genius, transcended that defect. And, as we have already pointed out, they were, when at last they got to power, too old to use it. Before they could grasp the situation they had to control, most of them were dead.

It would be interesting to speculate how far it would have tilted the balance in favour of the church if the cardinals had retired at fifty, and if no one could have been elected Pope after fifty-five. This would have lengthened the average reign of each Pope, and enormously increased the continuity of the policy of the church. And it is perhaps possible that a more perfect system of selecting the cardinals, who were the electors and counsellors of the Pope, might have been devised. The rules and ways by which men reach power are of very great importance in human affairs. The psychology of the ruler is a science that has still to be properly studied. We have seen the Roman

Republic wrecked, and here we see the church failing in its world mission very largely through ineffective electoral methods.

§ 16

Gothic Architecture and Art.

Certain architectural and artistic developments mark the phases in the history of Christianity from the Romanesque period to the age of doubt and declining faith of which Frederick II was the precursor. There was a great outbreak of cathedral-building in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and a rapid development of western Romanesque architecture into what is called, in the stricter sense, Gothic. The steep roof of the Romanesque towers elongated and became a spire; the cross-groined vaulted roof was introduced, and the pointed arch—which had already prevailed in Arabic art for two hundred years or more—swept away the rounded arch. With these features came a great development and elaboration of windows, and of stained glass.

It was probably the growth and enrichment of the monastic orders that released the flow of artistic energy that gave the world the Church of Notre Dame in Paris, for example, the Cathedral of Chartres, Amiens Cathedral, the magnificent beginning of Beauvais. And for several centuries the Gothic impulse was sustained. In the thirteenth century the traceried window was reaching its highest degree of development. In the fourteenth, Gothic became for a time exuberant and then in reaction severe. The English struck out a line of their own in the high austere "Perpendicular." Over large areas of Northern and Eastern Germany, where building-stone was rare or inaccessible, the Gothic forms took on a new quality with the use of brick. With the onset of the fifteenth century Gothic architecture waned. The great days of the church in Europe were past, and new social conditions had to express themselves in novel forms. In some towns of Belgium and Holland we still have the cathedral incomplete, and beside it some great municipal building which robbed the church of its constructive resources. In Ypres, for example, before the destruction of the war, the great Cloth Hall completely overshadowed the Cathedral.

In Spain, the Gothic followed the Christians as province by province they won back the peninsula from the Moors. The Mauresque Arabic and the Spanish Gothic developed each in its own confines. In Seville, close to the Mauresque palace of

the Alcazar rises a great Gothic cathedral, whose towering interior seems to be exulting in sombre triumph over the conquered conquerors.

The Gothic never penetrated deeply into Italy. The most prominent example is Milan Cathedral. But Italy, during the Gothic period in Western Europe, was a battleground of ancient traditions and conflicting styles. The Byzantine St. Mark's at Venice balances the Gothic of Milan Cathedral, and Norman and Saracen mingle their spirit with the Roman in such buildings as the Cathedral at Amalfi. The Cathedral and Baptistery and Campanile at Pisa compose a most expressive group of Italian buildings dating from round and about the twelfth century.

Throughout the Gothic period the passion for representative art, so strong in both Aryan and Hamitic peoples, is very evidently struggling against the instinctive disposition to suppress that appeared in the Western world after the first prevalence of Christianity and Islam. There was, it must be understood, no expressed hostility to representative art among the Christians. Classical Roman painting died out in the Catacombs and adorned Christian graves. A certain amount of mural painting of inferior quality struggled on through the Middle Ages and increased in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

With increased security came a growing desire to beautify churches and monastic buildings. Painting spread from the cramped work of the illuminator to walls and modern panels. The stiff saints became more flexible; backgrounds became visible behind them, and gave the painter scope for naturalistic detail. The painted panel, which was made in one place, and taken to, and fixed up, in another, was the ancestor of the independent picture. For a time, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, France and Germany were ahead of Italy in this revival of pictorial art. Simultaneously the stone-mason was infusing his laborious decoration of the Gothic building with an increasing animation and realism. He turned the water-spout into a grimacing gargoyle; he put faces and figures upon capital and pinnacle; he brought the sculptured saint from relief into solidity. Here also Germany led. This creeping back of imitation is the most interesting general fact in the artistic history of the Middle Ages.

We have already noted a similar previous disappearance and reappearance of imitation in human history. The later Palæolithic man carved and drew realities with freedom and vigour, but the early Neolithic man has left us neither good

drawings nor good carvings of living things. Plastic art scarcely reappeared until the Bronze Age. Exactly the same thing on a larger scale happened between the great days of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages, not only under Christianity but under Islam. There has never been a full and satisfactory explanation of these alternations. Art retreated from reality and devoted itself to formal elaboration. Since then there has been another great wave of vivid imitativeness, culminating, perhaps, a little while ago. Both pictures and sculpture were, generally speaking, more fully imitative and representative, less symbolical and indicative, fifty years ago than they are now. Here we can offer no satisfactory explanation for these waves in the general artistic impulse, these alternations of exultant, intensely-rendered reality with aloofness and austerity. It is as if excessive realism, excessive delight in the body and in movement and excitement, and circumstantial detail, produced at last reaction and an instinctive resort to abstraction and formality.

§ 17

Mediæval Music.

In the days of the Crusades very great changes were happening to music. Hitherto there had been no harmony recognized; music had been a simple affair of rhythm and melody: now began an entirely new development—first a primitive part-singing, and then the complication of more and more elaborately interwoven melodies. The different voices were made to sing simultaneously different airs which harmonized. Concurrently a notation was evolved capable of expressing and recording the new polyphonic music. The notation was as necessary to the free development of music as writing was to the appearance of a growing and varying literature.

It would seem that the first beginnings of this re-making of music were in Western Europe and probably in Wales and the English Midlands. For there it is that we have the first recorded cases of part-singing. It may have begun as early as the ninth century; it was certainly established and practised by the end of the twelfth century. A fine piece of English part-writing dating from about 1240 is still extant. It is the *rota*, "Sumer is i-cumen in." It was probably written by John of Fornsete, a Reading monk, and, says Sir W. H. Hadow, "its part-writing is astonishingly sound and satisfying, and it can be heard with great pleasure at the present day. . . . It is the first voice in

the development of our Western art which can still speak to us in friendly and familiar accents."

Those days of wandering adventurers were also days of wandering music. The Troubadours went from castle to castle; there were many mendicant minstrels, and the new conception of harmony spread through France and Italy and into Central Europe. Most of the compositions were unaccompanied vocal polyphony; the development of instrumentation came later with the lute, the virginal, the viol, and the greater use and range of the organ as the skill of the organ-builders increased. The castle and court had yet to reach such a pitch of luxury and elaboration as was necessary for the production of more than mainly vocal and mainly popular secular music; the chief laboratories of the new music were at first the great monastic cathedral choirs. There the innovating choir-masters struggled against a very conservative religiosity, and struggled far.

The dominant form of the phase of mainly vocal harmony was the madrigal. Palestrina (1526-1594), the Italian composer, was the culminating master of this period of choral music. In the sixteenth century the Italian makers were already perfecting the violin, the modern organ was being evolved, new social conditions were arising, new feelings were seeking expression, and new methods were being developed that were to render possible a still broader type of musical composition in which instrumentation was to play the greater part.

BOOK VII

THE MONGOL EMPIRES OF THE LAND WAYS AND THE NEW EMPIRES OF THE SEA WAYS

CHAPTER 32

THE GREAT EMPIRE OF JENGIS KHAN AND HIS SUCCESSORS

(The Age of the Land Ways)

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| § 1. <i>Asia at the End of the Twelfth Century.</i> | § 6. <i>The Yuan and Ming Dynasties in China.</i> |
| § 2. <i>The Rise and Victories of the Mongols.</i> | § 7. <i>The Mongols Revert to Tribalism.</i> |
| § 3. <i>The Travels of Marco Polo.</i> | § 8. <i>The Kipchak Empire and the Tsar of Muscovy.</i> |
| § 4. <i>The Ottoman Turks and Constantinople.</i> | § 9. <i>Timurlane.</i> |
| § 5. <i>Why the Mongols were not Christianized.</i> | § 10. <i>The Mongol Empire of India.</i> |
| | § 11. <i>The Gipsies.</i> |

§ 1

WE have to tell now of the last and greatest of all the raids of nomadism upon the civilizations of the East and West. We have traced in this history the development side by side of these two ways of living, and we have pointed out that, as the civilizations grew more extensive and better organized, the arms, the mobility, and the intelligence of the nomads also improved. The nomad was not simply an uncivilized man, he was a man specialized and specializing along his own line. From the very beginning of history the nomad and the settled people have been in reaction. We have told of the Semitic and Elamite raids upon Sumer; we have seen the Western empire smashed by the nomads of the great plains and Persia conquered and Byzantium shaken by the nomads of

Arabia. The Mongol aggression, which began with the thirteenth century, was the latest thus far of these destructive reploughings of human association.

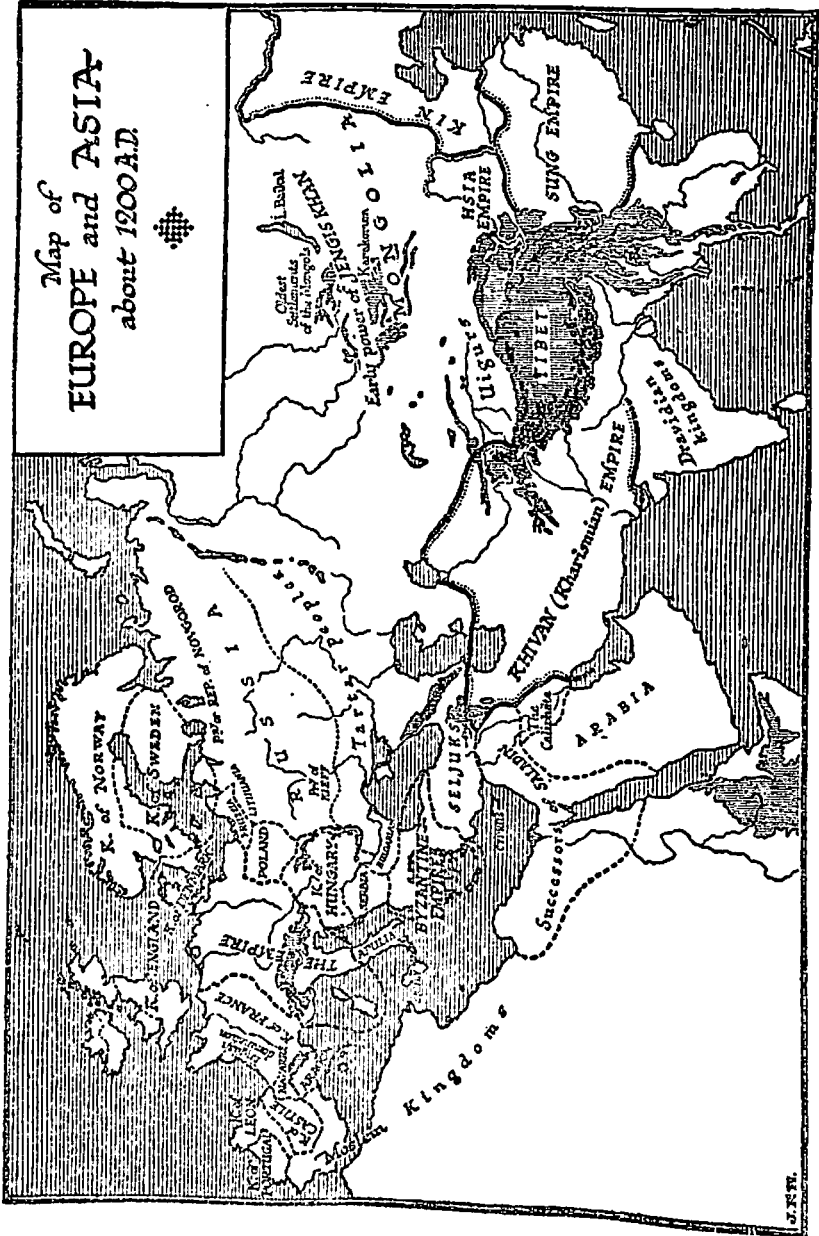
From entire obscurity the Mongols came very suddenly into history towards the close of the twelfth century. They appeared in the country to the north of China, in the land of origin of the Huns and Turks, and they were manifestly of the same strain as these peoples. They were gathered together under a chief, with whose name we will not tax the memory of the reader: under his son Jengis Khan their power grew with extraordinary swiftness.

The reader will already have an idea of the gradual breaking up of the original unity of Islam. In the beginning of the thirteenth century there were a number of separate and discordant Moslem states in Western Asia. There was Egypt (with Palestine and much of Syria) under the successors of Saladin, there was the Seljuk power in Asia Minor, there was still an Abbasid caliphate in Bagdad, and to the east of this again there had grown up a very considerable empire, the Kharismian empire, that of the Turkish princes from Khiva who had conquered a number of fragmentary Seljuk principalities and reigned from the Ganges valley to the Tigris. They had but an insecure hold on the Persian and Indian populations.

The state of the Chinese civilization was equally inviting to an enterprising invader. Our last glimpse of China in this history was in the seventh century during the opening years of the Tang dynasty, when that shrewd and able emperor Tai-tsung was weighing the respective merits of Nestorian Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and the teachings of Lao Tse, and on the whole inclining to the opinion that Lao Tse was as good a teacher as any. We have described his reception of the traveller Yuan Chwang. Tai-tsung tolerated all religions, but several of his successors conducted a pitiless persecution of the Buddhist faith; it flourished in spite of these persecutions, and its monasteries played a somewhat analogous part in at first sustaining learning and afterwards retarding it, that the Christian monastic organization did in the West.

¹ By the tenth century the mighty Tang dynasty was in an extreme state of decay; the usual degenerative process through a series of voluptuaries and incapables had gone on, and China broke up again politically into a variable number of contending states, "The Age of the Ten States," an age of confusion that lasted through the first half of the tenth century. Then arose a dynasty, the Northern Sung (960-1127), which established a

Map of
EUROPE and ASIA
 about 1200 A.D.



W. H. ST. JOHN

sort of unity, but which was in constant struggle with a number of Hunnish peoples from the north who were pressing down the eastern coast. For a time one of these peoples, the Khitan, prevailed. In the twelfth century these people had been subjugated, and had given place to another Hunnish empire, the empire of the Kin, with its capital at Peking and its southern boundary south of Hwang-ho.

The Sung empire shrank before this Kin empire. In 1138 the capital was shifted from Nankin, which was now too close to the northern frontier, to the city of Han Chau on the coast. From 1127 onward to 1295 the Sung dynasty is known as the Southern Sung. To the north-west of its territories there was now the Tartar empire of the Hsia, to the north the Kin empire, both states in which the Chinese population was under rulers in whom nomadic traditions were still strong. So that here on the east, also, the main masses of Asiatic mankind were under uncongenial rulers and ready to accept, if not to welcome, the arrival of a conqueror.

Northern India we have already noted was also a conquered country at the opening of the thirteenth century. It was at first a part of the Khivan empire, but in 1206 an adventurous ruler, Kutub, who had been a slave and who had risen as a slave to be governor of the Indian province, set up a separate Moslem state of Hindustan in Delhi. Brahminism, as we have already noted, had long since ousted Buddhism from India, but the converts to Islam were still but a small ruling minority in the land.

Such was the political state of Asia when Jengis Khan began to consolidate his power among the nomads in the country between the lakes Balkash and Baikal in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

§ 2

The Rise and Victories of the Mongols.

The career of conquest of Jengis Khan and his immediate successors astounded the world, and probably astounded no one more than these Mongol Khans themselves.

The Mongols were in the twelfth century a tribe subject to those Kin who had conquered North-east China. They were a horde of nomadic horsemen living in tents, and subsisting mainly upon mare's milk products and meat. Their occupations were pasturage and hunting, varied by war. Their occupations were northward as the snows melted for summer pasture, and south-

ward to winter pasture after the custom of the steppes. Their military education began with a successful insurrection against the Kin. The empire of Kin had the resources of half China behind it, and in the struggle the Mongols learnt very much of the military science of the Chinese. By the end of the twelfth century they were already a fighting tribe of exceptional quality.

The opening years of the career of Jengis were spent in developing his military machine, in assimilating the Mongols and the associated tribes about them into one organized army. His first considerable extension of power was westward, when the Tartar Kirghis and the Uighurs¹ (who were the Tartar people of the Tarim basin) were not so much conquered as induced to join his organization. He then attacked the Kin empire and took Peking (1214). The Khitan people, who had been so recently subdued by the Kin, threw in their fortunes with his, and were of very great help to him. The settled Chinese popula-

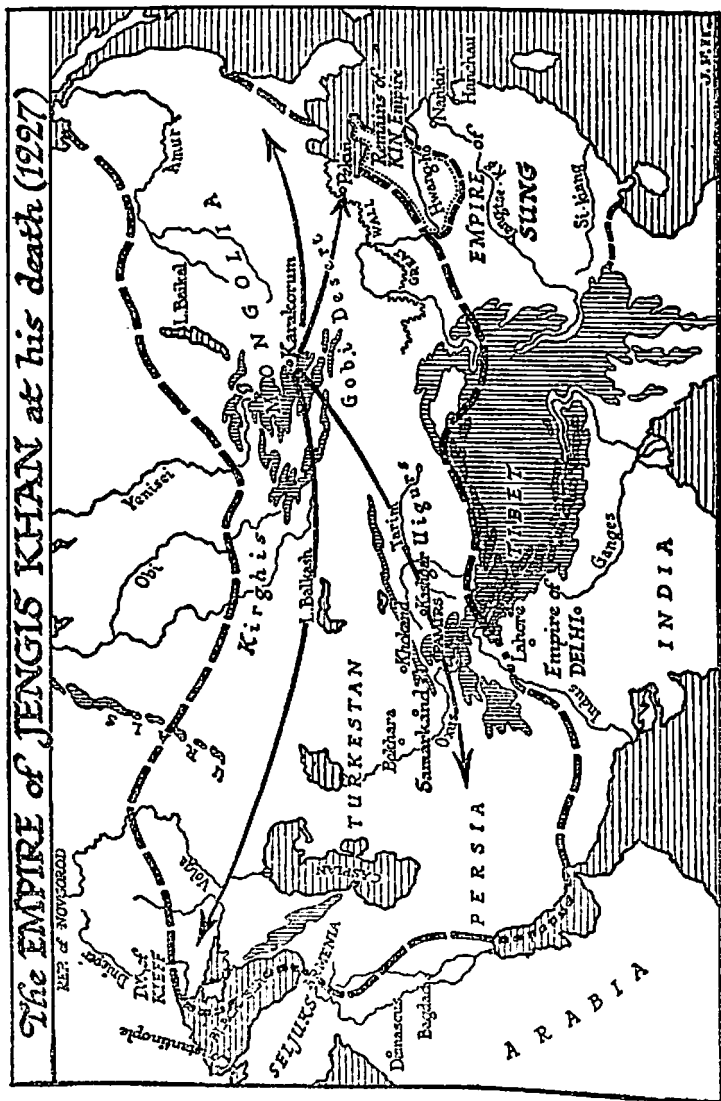
¹ The Uighurs first appear in the 6th century, when they were known as the Kao-ku or High Carts, one of the two main divisions of the Turks in and around Northern Mongolia. Their period of independent greatness covered A.D. 750-850, corresponding with the height of the glory of the famous T'ang Dynasty.

The Uighurs attained a very high level of culture, and recent archaeological research has brought to light a vast amount of Uighur literature and art from which we learn that Christianity, Buddhism and Manichæism were all practised in their kingdom, the utmost tolerance being observed while Manichæism was the state religion. The Uighurs were certainly the most civilized of all the northern neighbours of China, and though their kingdom was destroyed in 850 by a northern Turkish tribe, the Khirgiz, the Uighurs by no means disappear from history, and up to the 15th century we constantly find small Uighur principalities and states springing up, while during the whole of this period the Uighurs were extensively employed in Muhammadan chancelleries, playing much the same rôle in the government offices of Turkestan as the Hindus under the Delhi Moguls and the Bengalis under the British in India.

The period of Oriental history beginning with the appearance of Jengis Khan in the 13th century and ending with the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks, tells us of the rise and fall of a great number of Turkish dynasties in Central Asia, India and Persia; and it is curious to note that in most cases these dynasties were founded by men who had begun life as slaves. In an unpublished Persian MS. of the 13th century the following curious account of the Turks occurs:—

"It is common knowledge that all races and classes while they remain among their own people and in their own country are honoured and respected; but when they go abroad they become miserable and abject. The Turks, on the contrary, while they remain among their own people are merely a tribe among many tribes, and enjoy no particular power or status. But when they leave their own country and come to a Muhammadan country (the more remote they are from their own homes and relatives, the more highly they are valued and appreciated) they become Amirs and Generalissimos. Now from the days of Adam down to the present day no slave bought at a price has ever become king except among the Turks; and among the sayings of Afrasyab, who was king of the Turks, and was extraordinarily wise and learned, was his dictum, that the Turk is like a pearl in its shell at the bottom of the sea, which only becomes valuable when it leaves the sea and adorns the diadems of kings and the ears of brides."—(Note by Sir Denison Ross.)

tion went on sowing and reaping and trading during this change of masters without lending its weight to either side.



We have already mentioned the very recent Kharismian empire of Turkestan, Persia and North India. This empire extended eastward to Kashgar, and it must have seemed one of

the most progressive and hopeful empires of the time. Jengis Khan, while still engaged in this war with the Kin empire, sent envoys to Kharismia. They were put to death—an almost incredible stupidity. The Kharismian government, to use the political jargon of to-day, had decided not to “recognize” Jengis Khan, and took this spirited course with him. Thereupon (1218) the great host of horsemen that Jengis Khan had consolidated and disciplined swept over the Pamirs and down into Turkestan. It was well armed, and probably it had some guns and gunpowder for siege work—for the Chinese were certainly using gunpowder at this time, and the Mongols learnt its use from them. Kashgar, Khokand, Bokhara fell, and then Samarkand, the capital of the Kharismian empire. Thereafter nothing held the Mongols in the Kharismian territories. They swept westward to the Caspian, and southward as far as Lahore. To the north of the Caspian a Mongol army encountered a Russian force from Kieff. There was a series of battles, in which the Russian armies were finally defeated and the Grand Duke of Kieff taken prisoner. So it was the Mongols appeared on the northern shores of the Black Sea. A panic swept Constantinople, which set itself to reconstruct its fortifications. Meanwhile other armies were engaged in the conquest of the empire of the Hsia in China. This was annexed, and only the southern part of the Kin empire remained unsubdued. In 1227 Jengis Khan died in the midst of a career of triumph. His empire reached already from the Pacific to the Dnieper. And it was an empire still vigorously expanding.

Like all the empires founded by nomads, it was, to begin with, purely a military and administrative empire, a framework rather than a rule. It centred on the personality of the monarch, and its relation with the mass of the populations over which it ruled was simply one of taxation for the maintenance of the horde. But Jengis Khan had called to his aid a very able and experienced administrator of the Kin empire, who was learned in all the traditions and science of the Chinese. This statesman, Yeliu Chutsai, was able to carry on the affairs of the Mongols long after the death of Jengis Khan, and there can be little doubt that he is one of the great political heroes of history. He tempered the barbaric ferocity of his masters, and saved innumerable cities and works of art from destruction. He collected archives and inscriptions, and when he was accused of corruption his sole wealth was found to consist of documents and a few musical instruments. To him perhaps quite as much as to Jengis is the efficiency of the Mongol military machine to be

ascribed. Under Jengis, we may note further, we find the completest religious toleration established across the entire breadth of Asia.

At the death of Jengis the capital of the new empire was still in the great barbaric town of Karakorum in Mongolia. There an assembly of Mongol leaders elected Ogdai Khan, the son of Jengis, as his successor. The war against the vestiges of the Kin empire was prosecuted until Kin was altogether subdued (1234). The Chinese empire to the south under the Sung dynasty helped the Mongols in this task, so destroying their own bulwark against the universal conquerors. The Mongol hosts then swept right across Asia to Russia (1235), an amazing march; Kieff was destroyed in 1240, and nearly all Russia became tributary to the Mongols. Poland was ravaged, and a mixed army of Poles and Germans was annihilated at the battle of Liegnitz in Lower Silesia in 1241. The Emperor Frederick II does not seem to have made any great efforts to stay the advancing tide.

"It is only recently," says Bury in his notes to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "that European history has begun to understand that the successes of the Mongol army which overran Poland and occupied Hungary in the spring of A.D. 1241 were won by consummate strategy and were not due to a mere overwhelming superiority of numbers. But this fact has not yet become a matter of common knowledge; the vulgar opinion which represents the Tartars as a wild horde carrying all before them solely by their multitude, and galloping through Eastern Europe without a strategic plan, rushing at all obstacles and overcoming them by mere weight, still prevails. . . ."

"It was wonderful how punctually and effectually the arrangements of the commander were carried out in operations extending from the Lower Vistula to Transylvania. Such a campaign was quite beyond the power of any European army of the time, and it was beyond the vision of any European commander. There was no general in Europe, from Frederick II downwards, who was not a tyro in strategy compared to Subutai. It should also be noticed that the Mongols embarked upon the enterprise with full knowledge of the political situation of Hungary and the condition of Poland—they had taken care to inform themselves by a well-organized system of spies; on the other hand, the Hungarians and Christian powers, like childish barbarians, knew hardly anything about their enemies."

But though the Mongols were victorious at Liegnitz, they did not continue their drive westward. They were getting into woodlands and hilly country, which did not suit their tactics;

and so they turned southward and prepared to settle in Hungary, massacring or assimilating the kindred Magyar, even as these had previously massacred and assimilated the mixed Scythians and Avars and Huns before them. From the Hungarian plain they would probably have made raids west and south as the Hungarians had done in the ninth century, the Avars in the seventh and eighth, and the Huns in the fifth. But in Asia the Mongols were fighting a stiff war of conquest against the Sung, and they were also raiding Persia and Asia Minor; Ogdai died suddenly, and in 1242 there was trouble about the succession, and, recalled by this, the undefeated hosts of Mongols began to pour back across Hungary and Rumania towards the east.

To the great relief of Europe the dynastic troubles at Karakorum lasted for some years, and this vast new empire showed signs of splitting up. Mangu Khan became the Great Khan in 1251, and he nominated his brother Kublai Khan as Governor-General of China. Slowly but surely the entire Sung empire was subjugated, and as it was subjugated the eastern Mongols became more and more Chinese in their culture and methods. Tibet was invaded and devastated by Mangu, and Persia and Syria were invaded in good earnest. Another brother of Mangu, Hulagu, was in command of this latter war. He turned his arms against the caliphate and captured Bagdad, in which city he perpetrated a massacre of the entire population. Bagdad was still the religious capital of Islam, and the Mongols had become bitterly hostile to the Moslems. This hostility exacerbated the natural discord of nomad and townsman. In 1259 Mangu died, and in 1260—for it took the best part of a year for the Mongol leaders to gather from the extremities of this vast empire, from Hungary and Syria and Scind and China—Kublai was elected Great Khan. He was already deeply interested in Chinese affairs; he made his capital Peking instead of Karakorum, and Persia, Syria, and Asia Minor became virtually independent under his brother Hulagu; while the hordes of Mongols in Russia and Asia next to Russia, and various smaller Mongol groups in Turkestan, became also practically separate. Kublai died in 1294, and with his death even the titular supremacy of the Great Khan disappeared.

At the death of Kublai there was a main Mongol empire, with Peking as its capital, including all China and Mongolia; there was a second great Mongol empire, that of Kipchak, in Russia; there was a third in Persia, that founded by Hulagu, the Ilkhan empire, to which the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor were tributary; there was a Siberian state between Kipchak and Mongolia; and

another separate state, "Great Turkey," in Turkestan. It is particularly remarkable that India beyond the Punjab was never invaded by the Mongols during this period, and that an army under the Sultan of Egypt completely defeated Ketboga, Hulagu's general, in Palestine (1260), and stopped them from entering Africa. By 1260 the impulse of Mongol conquest had already passed its zenith. Thereafter the Mongol story is one of division and decay.

The Mongol dynasty that Kublai Khan had founded in China, the Yuan dynasty, lasted from 1280 until 1368. Later on a recrudescence of Mongolian energy in Western Asia was destined to create a still more enduring monarchy in India. But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Afghans and not the Mongols were masters of North India, and an Afghan empire extended into the Deccan.

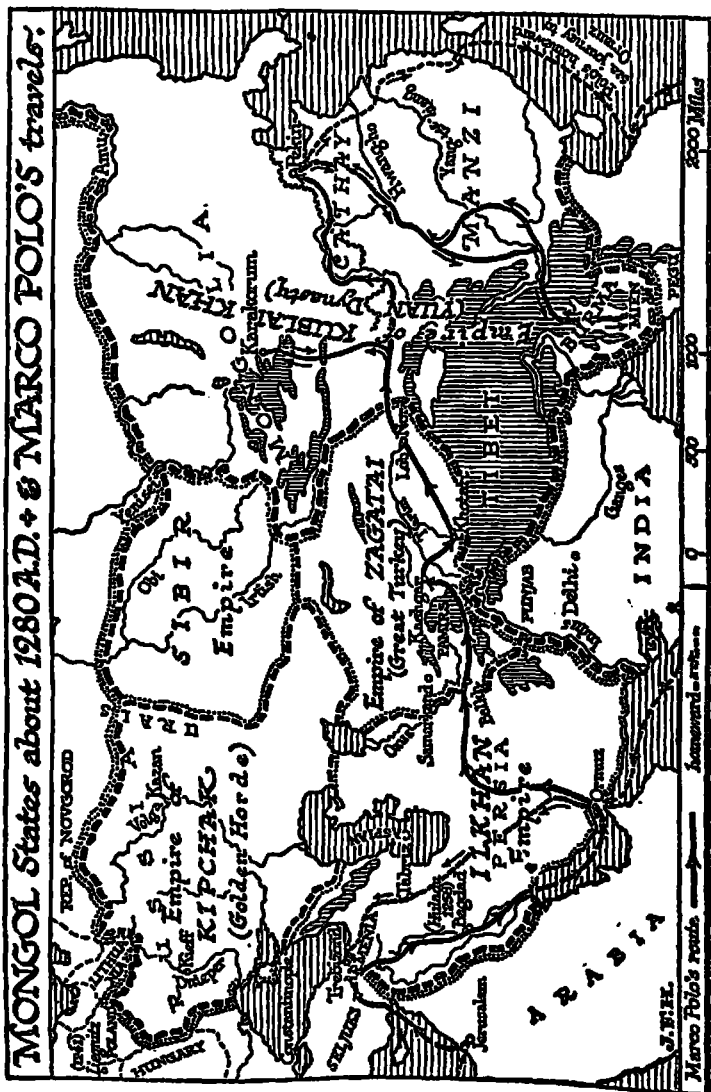
§ 3

The Travels of Marco Polo.

Now, this story of Mongolian conquests is surely one of the most remarkable in all history. The conquests of Alexander the Great cannot compare with them in extent. Their effect in diffusing and broadening men's ideas and stimulating their imaginations was enormous. For a time all Asia and Western Europe enjoyed an open intercourse; all the roads were temporarily open, and representatives of every nation appeared at the Court of Karakorum.

The barriers between Europe and Asia set up by the religious feud of Christianity and Islam were lowered. Great hopes were entertained by the papacy for the conversion of the Mongols to Christianity. Their only religion so far had been Shamanism, a primitive paganism. Envoys of the Pope, Buddhist priests from India, Parisian and Italian and Chinese artificers, Byzantine and Armenian merchants, mingled with Arab officials and Persian and Indian astronomers and mathematicians at the Mongol Court. We hear too much in history of the campaigns and massacres of the Mongols, and not enough of their curiosity and desire for learning. Not perhaps as an originative people, but as transmitters of knowledge and method their influence upon the world's history has been very great. And everything one can learn of the vague and romantic personalities of Jengis and Kublai tends to confirm the impression that these men were at least as understanding and creative monarchs as either that flamboyant but egotistical figure Alexander the Great, or that

raiser of political ghosts, that energetic but illiterate theologian Charlemagne.



The missionary enterprises of the papacy in Mongolia ended in failure. Christianity was losing its persuasive power. The Mongols had no prejudice against Christianity; they evidently

preferred it at first to Islam; but the missions that came to them were manifestly using the power in the great teachings of Jesus to advance the vast claims of the Pope to world dominion. Christianity so vitiated was not good enough for the Mongol mind. To make the empire of the Mongols part of the kingdom of God might have appealed to them; but not to make it a fief of a group of French and Italian priests, whose claims were as gigantic as their powers and outlook were feeble, who were now the creatures of the Emperor of Germany, now the nominees of the King of France, and now the victims of their own petty spites and vanities.

In 1269 Kublai Khan sent a mission to the Pope with the evident intention of finding some common mode of action with Western Christendom. He asked that a hundred men of learning and ability should be sent to his Court to establish an understanding. His mission found the Western world popeless, and engaged in one of those disputes about the succession that are so frequent in the history of the papacy. For two years there was no pope at all. When at last a pope was appointed, he dispatched two Dominican friars to convert the greatest power in Asia to his rule! Those worthy men were appalled by the length and hardship of the journey before them, and found an early excuse for abandoning the expedition.

But this abortive mission was only one of a number of attempts to communicate, and always they were feeble and feeble-spirited attempts, with nothing of the conquering fire of the earlier Christian missions. Innocent IV had already sent some Dominicans to Karakorum, and Saint Louis of France had also dispatched missionaries and relics by way of Persia; Mangu Khan had numerous Nestorian Christians at his Court, and subsequent papal envoys actually reached Peking. We hear of the appointment of various legates and bishops to the East, but many of these seem to have lost themselves and perhaps their lives before they reached China. There was a papal legate in Peking in 1346, but he seems to have been a mere papal diplomatist. With the downfall of the Mongolian (Yuan) dynasty (1368), the dwindling opportunity of the Christian missions passed altogether. The house of Yuan was followed by that of Ming, a strongly nationalist Chinese dynasty, at first very hostile to all foreigners. There may have been a massacre of the Christian missions. Until the later days of the Mings (1644) little more is heard of Christianity, whether Nestorian or Catholic, in China. Then a fresh and rather more successful attempt to propagate Catholic Christianity in China was made

by the Jesuits, but this second missionary wave reached China by the sea.

In the year 1298 a naval battle occurred between the Genoese and the Venetians, in which the latter were defeated. Among the 7,000 prisoners taken by the Genoese was a Venetian gentleman named Marco Polo, who had been a great traveller, and who was very generally believed by his neighbours to be given to exaggeration. He had taken part in that first mission to Kublai Khan, and had gone on when the two Dominicans turned back. While this Marco Polo was a prisoner in Genoa, he beguiled his tedium by talking of his travels to a certain writer named Rusticiano, who wrote them down. We will not enter here into the vexed question of the exact authenticity of Rusticiano's story—we do not certainly know in what language it was written—but there can be no doubt of the general truth of this remarkable narrative, which became enormously popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with all men of active intelligence. *The Travels of Marco Polo* is one of the great books of history. It opens this world of the thirteenth century to our imaginations—this century which saw the reign of Frederick II and the beginnings of the Inquisition—as no mere historian's chronicle can do. It led directly to the discovery of America.

It begins by telling of the journey of Marco's father, Nicolo Polo, and uncle, Maffeo Polo, to China. These two were Venetian merchants of standing, living in Constantinople, and somewhere about 1260 they went to the Crimea and thence to Kazan; from that place they journeyed to Bokhara, and at Bokhara they fell in with a party of envoys from Kublai Khan in China to his brother Hulagu in Persia. These envoys pressed them to come on to the Great Khan, who at that time had never seen men of the "Latin" peoples. They went on; and it is clear they made a very favourable impression upon Kublai, and interested him greatly in the civilization of Christendom. They were made the bearers of that request for a hundred teachers and learned men, "intelligent men acquainted with the Seven Arts, able to enter into controversy, and able clearly to prove to idolaters and other kinds of folk that the Law of Christ was best," to which we have just alluded. But when they returned Christendom was in a phase of confusion, and it was only after a delay of two years that they got their authorization to start for China again in the company of those two faint-hearted Dominicans. They took with them young Marco, and it is due to his presence and the boredom of his subsequent captivity at

Genoa that this most interesting experience has been preserved to us.

The three Polos started by way of Palestine, and not by the Crimea as in the previous expedition. They had with them a gold tablet and other indications from the Great Khan that must have greatly facilitated their journey. The Great Khan had asked for some oil from the lamp that burns in the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem; and so thither they first went, and then by way of Cilicia into Armenia. They went thus far north because the Sultan of Egypt was raiding the Ilkhan domains at this time. Thence they came by way of Mesopotamia to Ormuz, on the Persian Gulf, as if they contemplated a sea voyage. At Ormuz they met merchants from India. For some reason they did not take ship, but instead turned northward through the Persian deserts, and so by way of Balkh over the Pamir to Kashgar, and by way of Kotan and the Lob Nor (so following in the footsteps of Yuan Chwang) into the Hwang-ho valley and on to Peking. Peking, Polo calls "Cambaluc"; Northern China, "Cathay" (= Khitan); and Southern China of the former Sung dynasty, "Manzi."

At Peking was the Great Khan, and they were hospitably entertained. Maroo particularly pleased Kublai; he was young and clever, and it is clear he had mastered the Tartar language very thoroughly. He was given an official position and sent on several missions, chiefly in South-west China. The tale he had to tell of vast stretches of smiling and prosperous country, "all the way excellent hostelries for travellers," and "fine vineyards, fields and gardens," of "many abbeys" of Buddhist monks, of manufactures of "cloth of silk and gold and many fine taffetas," a "constant succession of cities and boroughs," and so on, first roused the incredulity and then fired the imagination of all Europe.

He told of Burmah, and of its great armies with hundreds of elephants, and how these animals were defeated by the Mongol bowmen, and also of the Mongol conquest of Pegu. He told of Japan, and greatly exaggerated the amount of gold in that country. And still more wonderful, he told of Christians and Christian rulers in China, and of a certain "Prester John," John the Priest, who was the "king" of a Christian people. Those people he had not seen. Apparently they were a tribe of Nestorian Tartars in Mongolia. An understandable excitement probably made Rusticiano over-emphasize what must have seemed to him the greatest marvel of the whole story, and Prester John became one of the most stimulating legends of

the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It encouraged European enterprise enormously to think that far away in China was a community of their co-religionists, presumably ready to welcome and assist them. For three years Marco ruled the city of Yang-chow as governor, and he probably impressed the Chinese inhabitants as being very little more of a foreigner than any Tartar would have been. He may also have been sent on a mission to India. Chinese records mention a certain Polo attached to the imperial council in 1277, a very valuable confirmation of the general truth of the Polo story.

The Polos had taken about three and a half years to get to China. They stayed there upwards of sixteen. Then they began to feel homesick. They were the protégés of Kublai, and possibly they felt that his favours roused a certain envy that might have disagreeable results after his death. They sought his permission to return. For a time he refused it, and then an opportunity occurred. Argon, the Ilkhan monarch of Persia, grandson of Hulagu, Kublai's brother, had lost his Mongol wife, and on her death-bed had promised not to wed any other woman but a Mongol of her own tribe. He sent ambassadors to Peking, and a suitable princess was selected, a girl of seventeen. To spare her the fatigues of the caravan route, it was decided to send her by sea with a suitable escort. The "Barons" in charge of her asked for the company of the Polos because these latter were experienced travellers and sage men, and the Polos snatched at this opportunity of getting homeward.

The expedition sailed from some port on the east of South China; they stayed long in Sumatra and South India, and they reached Persia after a voyage of two years. They delivered the young lady safely to Argon's successor—for Argon was dead—and she married Argon's son. The Polos then went by Tabriz to Trebizond, sailed to Constantinople, and got back to Venice about 1295.

It is related that the returned travellers, dressed in Tartar garb, were refused admission to their own house. It was some time before they could establish their identity. Many people who admitted that, were still inclined to look askance at them as shabby wanderers; and in order to dispel such doubts they gave a great feast, and when it was at its height they had their old padded suits brought to them, dismissed the servants, and then ripped open these garments, whereupon an incredible display of "rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, emeralds, and diamonds" poured out before the dazzled company. Even after this,