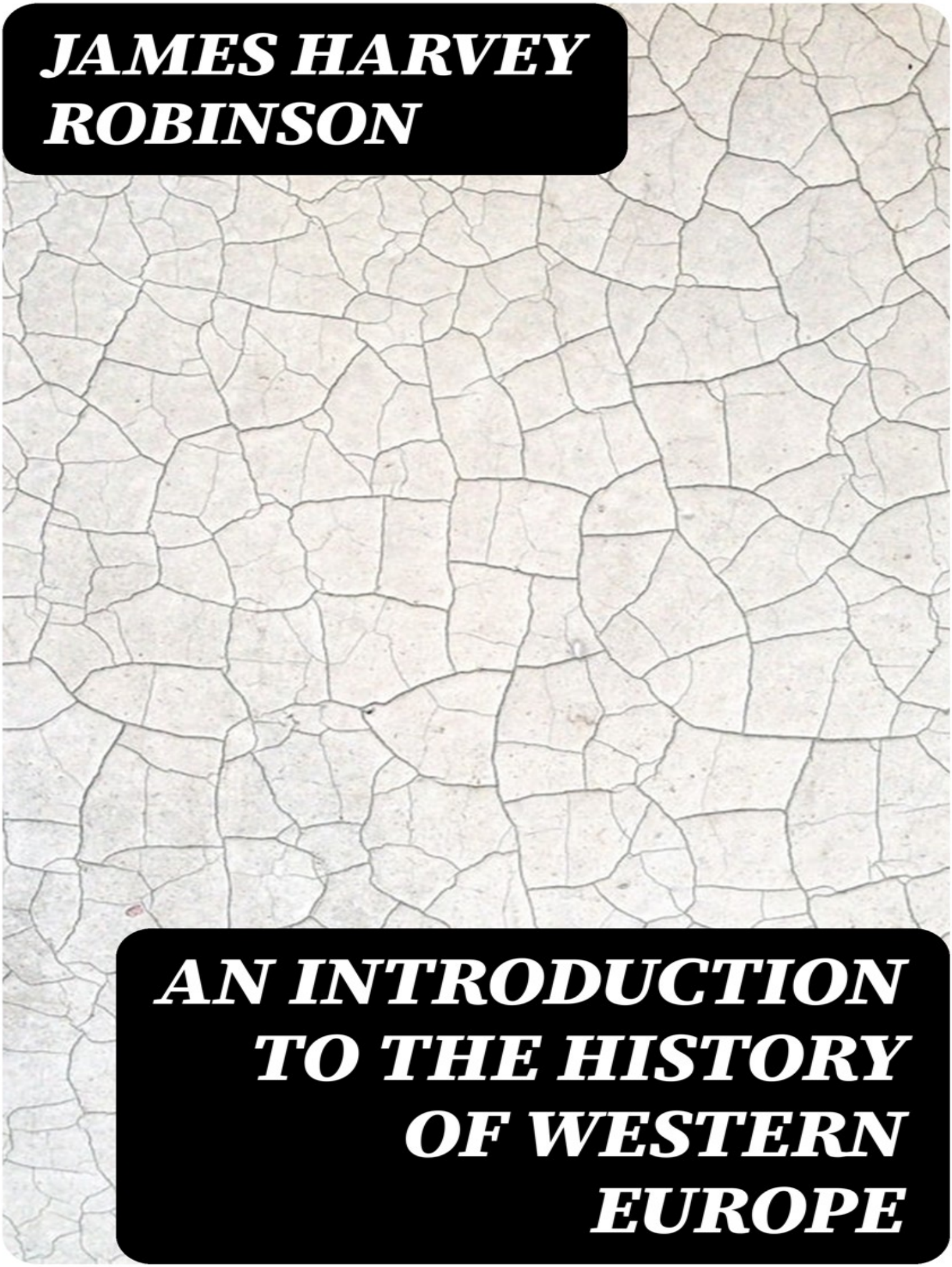
JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

James Harvey Robinson

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Table of Contents

In introducing the student to the history of the development of European culture, the problem of proportion has seemed to me, throughout, the fundamental one. Consequently I have endeavored not only to state matters truly and clearly but also to bring the narrative into harmony with the most recent conceptions of the relative importance of past events and institutions. It has seemed best, in an elementary treatise upon so vast a theme, to omit the names of many personages and conflicts of secondary importance which have ordinarily found their way into our historical text-books. I have ventured also to neglect a considerable number of episodes and anecdotes which, while hallowed by assiduous repetition, appear to owe their place in our manuals rather to accident or mere tradition than to any profound meaning for the student of the subject.

The space saved by these omissions has been used for three main purposes. Institutions under which Europe has lived for centuries, above all the Church, have been discussed with a good deal more fullness than is usual in similar manuals. The life and work of a few men of indubitably first-rate importance in the various fields of human endeavor—Gregory the Great, Charlemagne, Abelard, St. Francis, Petrarch, Luther, Erasmus, Voltaire, Napoleon, Bismarck—have been treated with care proportionate to their significance for the world. Lastly, the scope of the work has been broadened so that not only the

political but also the economic, intellectual, and artistic achievements of the past form an integral part of the narrative.

I have relied upon a great variety of sources belonging to the various orders in the hierarchy of historical literature; it is happily unnecessary to catalogue these. In some instances I have found other manuals, dealing with portions of my field, of value. In the earlier chapters, Emerton's admirable *Introduction to the Middle Ages* furnished many suggestions. For later periods, the same may be said of Henderson's careful *Germany in the Middle Ages* and Schwill's clear and well-proportioned *History of Modern Europe*. For the most recent period, I have made constant use of Andrews' scholarly *Development of Modern Europe*. For England, the manuals of Green and Gardiner have been used. The greater part of the work is, however, the outcome of study of a wide range of standard special treatises dealing with some short period or with a particular phase of European progress. As examples of these, I will mention only Lea's monumental contributions to our knowledge of the jurisprudence of the Church, Rashdall's *History of the Universities in the Middle Ages*, Richter's incomparable *Annalen der Deutschen Geschichte im Mittelalter*, the *Histoire Générale*, and the well-known works of Luchaire, Voigt, Hefele, Bezold, Janssen, Levasseur, Creighton, Pastor. In some cases, as in the opening of the Renaissance, the Lutheran Revolt, and the French Revolution, I have been able to form my opinions to some extent from first-hand material.

My friends and colleagues have exhibited a generous interest in my enterprise, of which I have taken constant advantage. Professor E.H. Castle of Teachers College, Miss Ellen S. Davison, Dr. William R. Shepherd, and Dr. James T. Shotwell of the historical department of Columbia University, have very kindly read part of my manuscript. The proof has been revised by my colleague, Professor William A. Dunning, Professor Edward P. Cheyney of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Ernest F. Henderson, and by Professor Dana C. Munro of the University of Wisconsin. To all of these I am much indebted. Both in the arduous preparation of the manuscript and in the reading of the proof my wife has been my constant companion, and to her the volume owes innumerable rectifications in arrangement and diction. I would also add a word of gratitude to my publishers for their hearty coöperation in their important part of the undertaking.

The *Readings in European History*, a manual now in preparation, and designed to accompany this volume, will contain comprehensive bibliographies for each chapter and a selection of illustrative material, which it is hoped will enable the teacher and pupil to broaden and vivify their knowledge. In the present volume I have given only a few titles at the end of some of the chapters, and in the footnotes I mention, for collateral reading, under the heading "Reference," chapters in the best available books, to which the student may be sent for additional detail. Almost all the books referred to might properly find a place in every high-school library.

J.H.R.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
January 12, 1903.

LIST OF MAPS

Table of Contents

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF WESTERN EUROPE

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

THE HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW

Table of Contents

The scope of history.

1. History, in the broadest sense of the word, is all that we know about everything that man has ever done, or thought, or hoped, or felt. It is the limitless science of past human affairs, a subject immeasurably vast and important but exceedingly vague. The historian may busy himself deciphering hieroglyphics on an Egyptian obelisk, describing a mediæval monastery, enumerating the Mongol emperors of Hindustan or the battles of Napoleon. He may explain how the Roman Empire was conquered by the German barbarians, or why the United States and Spain came to blows in 1898, or what Calvin thought of Luther, or what a French peasant had to eat in the eighteenth century. We can know something of each of these matters if we choose to examine the evidence which still exists; they all help to make up history.

Object of this volume.

The present volume deals with a small but very important portion of the history of the world. Its object is to give as adequate an account as is possible in one volume of the chief changes in western Europe since the German barbarians overcame the armies of the Roman Empire and set up states of their own, out of which the present countries of France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, and England have

slowly grown. There are, however, whole libraries upon the history of each of these countries during the last fifteen hundred years, and it requires a volume or two to give a tolerably complete account of any single important person, like St. Francis, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, or Napoleon. Besides biographies and general histories, there are many special treatises upon the Church and other great institutions; upon the literature, art, philosophy, and law of the various countries. It is obvious, therefore, that only a very few of the historical facts known to scholars can possibly find a place in a single volume such as this. One who undertakes to condense what we know of Europe's past, since the times of Theodosius and Alaric, into the space of six hundred pages assumes a very grave responsibility. The reader has a right to ask not only that what he finds in the book shall be at once true and clearly stated, but that it shall consist, on the whole, of the most important and useful of all the things which might have been selected from the well-nigh infinite mass of true things that are known.

We gain practically nothing from the mere enumeration of events and dates. The student of history wishes to know how people lived; what were their institutions (which are really only the habits of nations), their occupations, interests, and achievements; how business was transacted in the Middle Ages almost without the aid of money; how, later, commerce increased and industry grew up; what a great part the Christian church played in society; how the monks lived and what they did for mankind. In short, the object of an introduction to mediæval and modern European

history is the description of the most significant achievements of western civilization during the past fifteen hundred years,—the explanation of how the Roman Empire of the West and the wild and unknown districts inhabited by the German races have become the Europe of Gladstone and Bismarck, of Darwin and Pasteur.

In order to present even an outline of the great changes during this long period, all that was exceptional and abnormal must be left out. We must fix our attention upon man's habitual conduct, upon those things that he kept on doing in essentially the same way for a century or so. Particular events are important in so far as they illustrate these permanent conditions and explain how the western world passed from one state to another.

We should study the past sympathetically

We must learn, above all, to study sympathetically institutions and beliefs that we are tempted at first to declare absurd and unreasonable. The aim of the historian is not to prove that a particular way of doing a thing is right or wrong, as, for instance, intrusting the whole government to a king or forbidding clergymen to marry. His object is to show as well as he can how a certain system came to be introduced, what was thought of it, how it worked, and how another plan gradually supplanted it. It seems to us horrible that a man should be burned alive because he holds views of Christianity different from those of his neighbors. Instead, however, of merely condemning the practice, we must, as historical students, endeavor to see why practically every one in the thirteenth century, even the wisest and most tender-hearted, agreed that such

a fearful punishment was the appropriate one for a heretic. An effort has, therefore, been made throughout this volume to treat the convictions and habits of men and nations in the past with consideration; that is, to make them seem natural and to show their beneficent rather than their evil aspects. It is not the weakness of an institution, but the good that is in it, that leads men to adopt and retain it.

All general changes take place gradually.

Impossibility of dividing the past into clearly defined periods.

2. It is impossible to divide the past into distinct, clearly defined periods and prove that one age ended and another began in a particular year, such as 476, or 1453, or 1789. Men do not and cannot change their habits and ways of doing things all at once, no matter what happens. It is true that a single event, such as an important battle which results in the loss of a nation's independence, may produce an abrupt change in the government. This in turn may encourage or discourage commerce and industry and modify the language and the spirit of a people. Yet these deeper changes take place only very gradually. After a battle or a revolution the farmer will sow and reap in his old way, the artisan will take up his familiar tasks, and the merchant his buying and selling. The scholar will study and write and the household go on under the new government just as they did under the old. So a change in government affects the habits of a people but slowly in any case, and it may leave them quite unaltered.

The French Revolution, at the end of the eighteenth century, was probably the most abrupt and thoroughgoing

change in the habits of a nation of which we have any record. But we shall find, when we come to study it, that it was by no means so sudden in reality as is ordinarily supposed. Moreover, the innovators did not even succeed in permanently altering the form of government; for when the French, after living under a monarchy for many centuries, set up a republic in 1792, the new government lasted only a few years. The nation was monarchical by habit and soon gladly accepted the rule of Napoleon, which was more despotic than that of any of its former kings. In reorganizing the state he borrowed much from the discarded monarchy, and the present French republic still retains many of these arrangements.

The unity or continuity of history.

This tendency of mankind to do, in general, this year what it did last, in spite of changes in some one department of life, —such as substituting a president for a king, traveling by rail instead of on horseback, or getting the news from a newspaper instead of from a neighbor,—results in what is called the *unity* or *continuity of history*. The truth that no abrupt change has ever taken place in all the customs of a people, and that it cannot, in the nature of things, take place, is perhaps the most fundamental lesson that history teaches.

Historians sometimes seem to forget this principle, when they claim to begin and end their books at precise dates. We find histories of Europe from 476 to 918, from 1270 to 1492, as if the accession of a capable German king in 918, or the death of a famous French king in 1270, or the discovery of America, marked a general change in European affairs. In

reality, however, no general change took place at these dates or in any other single year. It would doubtless have proved a great convenience to the readers and writers of history if the world had agreed to carry out a definite programme and alter its habits at precise dates, preferably at the opening of each century. But no such agreement has ever been adopted, and the historical student must take things as he finds them. He must recognize that nations retain their old customs while they adopt new ones, and that a portion of a nation may advance while a great part of it stays behind.

Meaning of the term 'Middle Ages.'

3. We cannot, therefore, hope to fix any year or event which may properly be taken as the beginning of that long period which followed the downfall of the Roman state in western Europe and which is commonly called the Middle Ages. Beyond the northern and western boundaries of the Roman Empire, which embraced the whole civilized world from the Euphrates to Britain, mysterious peoples moved about whose history before they came into occasional contact with the Romans is practically unknown. These Germans, or barbarians, as the Romans called them, were destined to put an end to the Roman Empire in the West. They had first begun to make trouble about a hundred years before Christ, when a great army of them was defeated by the Roman general, Marius. Julius Cæsar narrates, in polished Latin, familiar to all who have begun the study of that language, how fifty years later he drove back other bands. Five hundred years elapsed, however, between these first encounters and the founding of German kingdoms

within the boundaries of the Empire. With their establishment the Roman government in western Europe may be said to have come to an end and the Middle Ages to have begun.

Yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that this means that the Roman civilization suddenly disappeared at this time. As we shall see, it had gradually changed during the centuries following the golden age of Augustus, who died A.D. 14. Long before the German conquest, art and literature had begun to decline toward the level that they reached in the Middle Ages. Many of the ideas and conditions which prevailed after the coming of the barbarians were common enough before,—even the ignorance and want of taste which we associate particularly with the Middle Ages.

The term *Middle Ages* is, then, a vague one. It will be used in this volume to mean, roughly speaking, the period of nearly a thousand years that elapsed between the opening of the fifth century, when the disorder of the barbarian invasions was becoming general, and the fourteenth century, when Europe was well on its way to retrieve all that had been lost since the break-up of the Roman Empire.

The 'dark ages.'

It used to be assumed, when there was much less interest in the period than there now is, that with the disruption of the Empire and the disorder that followed, practically all culture perished for centuries, that Europe entered upon the "dark ages." These were represented as dreary centuries of ignorance and violence in marked contrast to the civilization of the Greeks

and Romans on the one hand, and to the enlightenment of modern times on the other. The more careful studies of the last half century have made it clear that the Middle Ages were not "dark" in the sense of being stagnant and unproductive. On the contrary, they were full of movement and growth, and we owe to them a great many things in our civilization which we should never have derived from Greece and Rome. It is the purpose of the first nineteen chapters of this manual to describe the effects of the barbarian conquests, the gradual recovery of Europe from the disorder of the successive invasions, and the peculiar institutions which grew up to meet the needs of the times. The remaining chapters will attempt to show how mediæval institutions, habits, and ideas were supplanted, step by step, by those which exist in Europe to-day.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AT ITS GREATEST EXTENT

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

WESTERN EUROPE BEFORE THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS

Table of Contents

Extent of the Roman Empire.

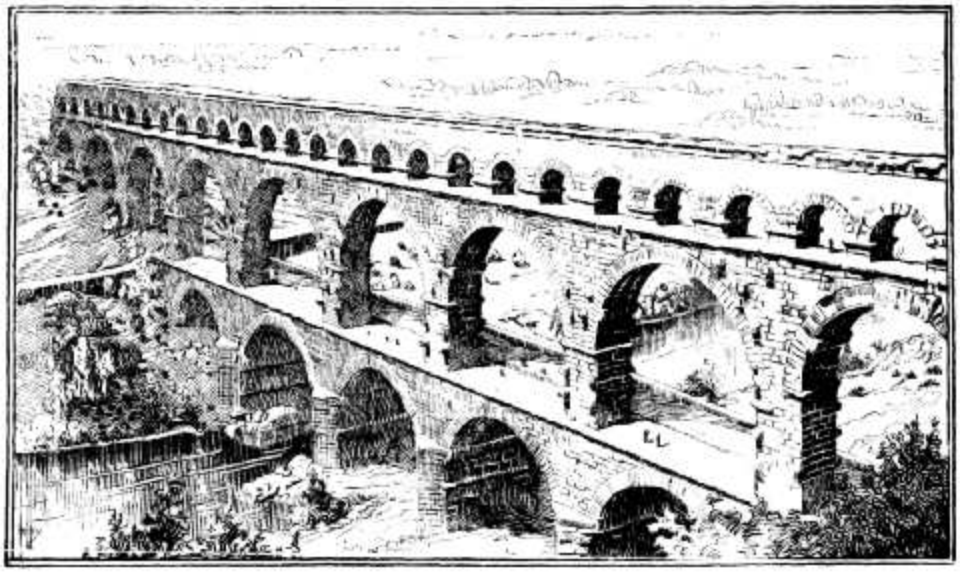
4. No one can hope to understand the Middle Ages who does not first learn something of the Roman Empire, within whose bounds the Germans set up their kingdoms and began the long task of creating modern Europe.

At the opening of the fifth century there were no separate, independent states in western Europe such as we find on the map to-day. The whole territory now occupied by England, France, Spain, and Italy formed at that time only a part of the vast realms ruled over by the Roman emperor and his host of officials. As for Germany, it was still a region of forests, familiar only to the barbarous and half-savage tribes who inhabited them. The Romans tried in vain to conquer this part of Europe, and finally had to content themselves with keeping the German hordes out of the Empire by means of fortifications and guards along the Rhine and Danube rivers.

Great diversity of races included within the Empire.

The Roman Empire, which embraced southern and western Europe, western Asia, and even the northern portion of Africa, included the most diverse peoples and races. Egyptians, Arabs, Jews, Greeks, Germans, Gauls, Britons, Iberians,—all alike were under the sovereign rule of

Rome. One great state embraced the nomad shepherds who spread their tents on the borders of Sahara, the mountaineers in the fastnesses of Wales, and the citizens of Athens, Alexandria, and Rome, heirs to all the luxury and learning of the ages. Whether one lived in York or Jerusalem, Memphis or Vienna, he paid his taxes into the same treasury, he was tried by the same law, and looked to the same armies for protection.



Remains of a Roman Aqueduct, now used as a Bridge, near Nîmes, Southern France

Bonds which held the Empire together.

At first it seems incredible that this huge Empire, which included African and Asiatic peoples as well as the most various races of Europe in all stages of civilization, could have held together for five centuries instead of falling to pieces, as might have been expected, long before the barbarians came in sufficient strength to establish their own kingdoms in its midst. When, however, we consider the bonds of union which held the state together it is easy to understand the permanence of the Empire. These were: (1) the wonderfully organized government which penetrated to every part of the realm and allowed little to escape it; (2) the worship of the emperor as the incarnation of the government; (3) the Roman law in force everywhere; (4) the admirable roads and the uniform system of coinage which encouraged intercommunication; and, lastly, (5) the Roman colonies and the teachers maintained by the government,

for through them the same ideas and culture were carried to even the most distant parts of the Empire.

The Roman government attempted to regulate everything.

Let us first glance at the government and the emperor. His decrees were dispatched throughout the length and breadth of the Roman dominions; whatsoever pleased him became law, according to the well-known principle of the Roman constitution. While the cities were permitted some freedom in the regulation of their purely local affairs, the emperor and his innumerable and marvelously organized officials kept an eye upon even the humblest citizen. The Roman government, besides maintaining order, administering justice, and defending the boundaries, assumed many other responsibilities. It watched the grain dealers, butchers, and bakers; saw that they properly supplied the public and never deserted their occupation. In some cases it forced the son to follow the profession of his father. If it could have had its way, it would have had every one belong to a definite class of society, and his children after him. It kept the unruly poorer classes quiet in the towns by furnishing them with bread, and sometimes with wine, meat, and clothes. It provided amusement for them by expensive entertainments, such as races and gladiatorial combats. In a word, the Roman government was not only wonderfully organized, so that it penetrated to the utmost confines of its territory, but it attempted to guard and regulate almost every interest in life.

The worship of the emperor.

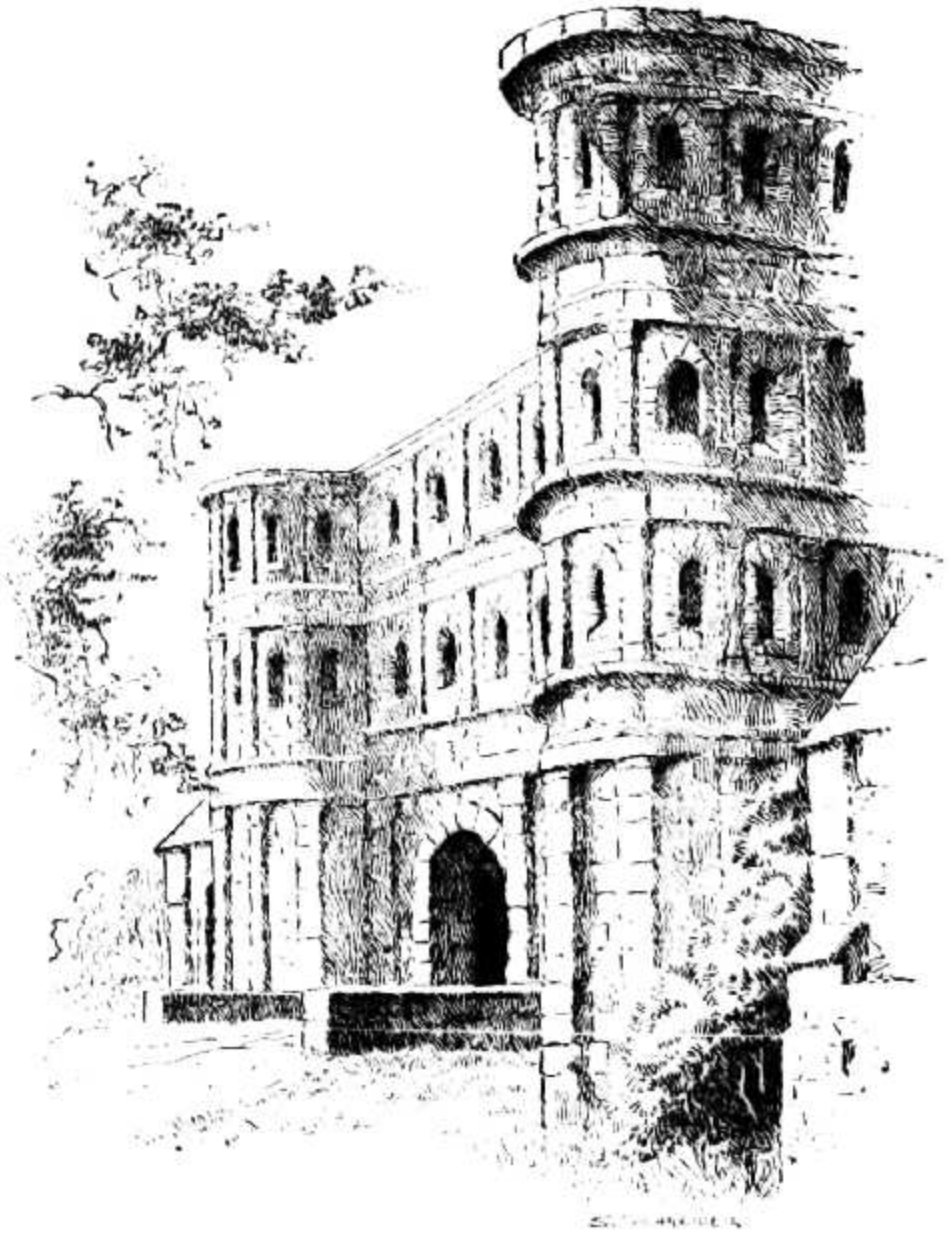
Every one was required to join in the worship of the emperor because he stood

for the majesty of the Roman dominion. The inhabitants of each province might revere their particular gods, undisturbed by the government, but all were obliged as good citizens to join in the official sacrifices to the deified head of the state. The early Christians were persecuted, not only because their religion was different from that of their fellows, but because they refused to offer homage to the image of the emperor and openly prophesied the downfall of the Roman state. Their religion was incompatible with what was then deemed good citizenship, inasmuch as it forbade them to express the required veneration for the government.

The Roman law.

As there was one government, so there was one law for all the civilized world. Local differences were not considered; the same principles of reason, justice, and humanity were believed to hold whether the Roman citizen lived upon the Euphrates or the Thames. The law of the Roman Empire is its chief legacy to posterity. Its provisions are still in force in many of the states of Europe to-day, and it is one of the subjects of study in our American universities. It exhibited a humanity unknown to the earlier legal codes. The wife, mother, and infant were protected from the arbitrary power of the head of the house, who, in earlier centuries, had been privileged to treat the members of his family as slaves. It held that it was better that a guilty person should escape than that an innocent person should be condemned. It conceived humanity, not as a group of nations and tribes, each with its peculiar institutions and legal customs, but as one people

included in one great empire and subject to a single system of law based upon reason and equity.



A Fortified Roman Gateway at Treves

Roads and public works.

Magnificent roads were constructed, which enabled the messengers of the government and its armies to reach every part of the Empire with incredible speed. These highways made commerce easy and encouraged merchants and

travelers to visit the most distant portions of the realm. Everywhere they found the same coins and the same system of weights and measures. Colonies were sent out to the confines of the Empire, and the remains of great public buildings, of theaters and bridges, of sumptuous villas and baths at places like Treves, Cologne, Bath, and Salzburg indicate how thoroughly the influence and civilization of Rome penetrated to the utmost parts of the territory subject to her rule.

The same culture throughout the Roman Empire.

The government encouraged education by supporting at least three teachers in every town of any considerable importance. They taught rhetoric and oratory and explained the works of the great writers. The Romans, who had no marked literary or artistic ability, had adopted the culture of the Greeks. This was spread abroad by the government teachers so that an educated man was pretty sure to find, even in the outlying parts of the great Empire, other educated men with much the same interests and ideas as his own. Everywhere men felt themselves to be not mere natives of this or that land but citizens of the world.

Loyalty to the Empire and conviction that it was eternal.

During the four centuries from the first emperor, Augustus, to the barbarian invasions we hear of no attempt on the part of its subjects to overthrow the Empire or to secede from it. The Roman state, it was universally believed, was to endure forever. Had a rebellious nation succeeded in throwing off the rule of the emperor

and establishing its independence, it would only have found itself outside the civilized world.

Reasons why the Empire lost its power to defend itself against the Germans.

5. Just why the Roman government, once so powerful and so universally respected, finally became unable longer to defend its borders and gave way before the scattered attacks of the German peoples, who never combined in any general alliance against it, is a very difficult question to answer satisfactorily. The inhabitants of the Empire appear gradually to have lost their energy and self-reliance and to have become less and less prosperous. This may be explained partially at least by the following considerations: (1) the terrible system of taxation, which discouraged and not infrequently ruined the members of the wealthier classes; (2) the existence of slavery, which served to discredit honest labor and demoralized the free workingmen; (3) the steady decrease of population; (4) the infiltration of barbarians, who prepared the way for the conquest of the western portion of the Empire by their fellow-barbarians.

Oppressive taxation.

It required a great deal of money to support the luxurious court of the emperors and their innumerable officials and servants, and to supply "bread and circuses" for the populace of the towns. All sorts of taxes and exactions were consequently devised by ingenious officials to make up the necessary revenue. The crushing burden of the great land tax, the emperor's chief source of income, was greatly increased by the pernicious way in which it was collected.