The Age of Discovery

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to the Renaissance, including Saladin,
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ught in Class 7 (age 12–13).

ovacs was born in Austria. He left his native country
he time of the Anschluss and joined the British Army
ca. After the Second World War, he settled in Britain,
he became a class teacher at the Rudolf Steiner
Edinburgh, where he remained until his retirement in
ed in 2001.

notes have been a useful and inspirational resource for
ers.

Waldorf Education Resources

Floris Books

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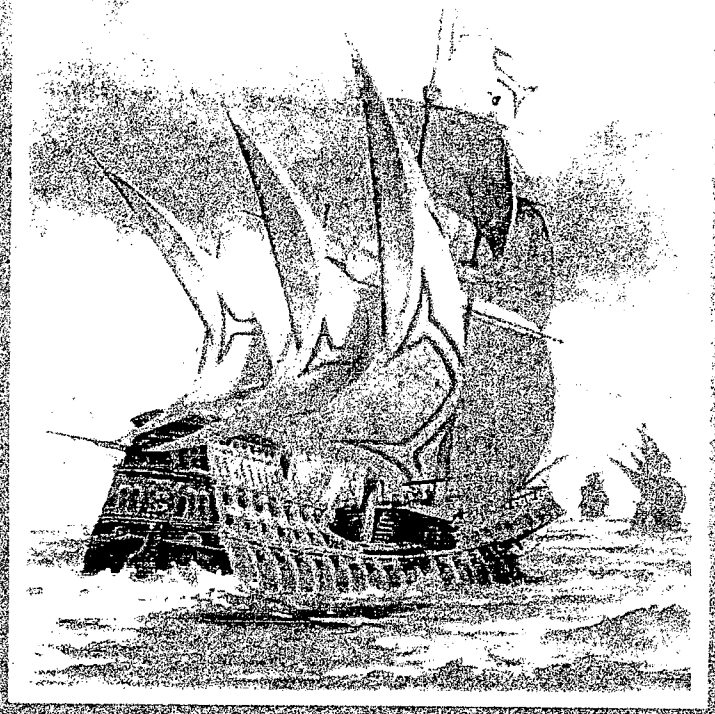
The Age of Discovery

Charles Kovacs



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Contents

Roman, draped in his toga, walked with *dignity*. When a Roman walked to the Forum, or when he mounted the rostrum to make a speech, every gesture, every movement, every step was meant to make all others feel: here is a fine, noble person — somebody we must respect. A Roman walked and behaved with *dignity*.

But a Germanic warrior cared little for dignity; he felt the strength of his muscles in his arms and in his legs — and so he walked with a strong and heavy tread. Not dignity but *strength* was in his walk.

If you had met a noble Roman walking in the street, you would have had the feeling: here comes a noble, superior person, I must make way for him — it would be bad manners to stand in his way. But if you had met a Germanic warrior in the street you would have felt: I'd better get out of his way or he will knock me down.

The Germanic people enjoyed war, battles and fighting; they thought it shameful to die in bed — the "straw-death" as they called it. A man should die in battle.

Sometimes, if a great leader or a king was getting old and had not found death in battle and was too old to fight any longer, he would order his men to get a "dragon-ship" ready. On this dragon-ship they would pile all his treasures and his weapons. Then the old king himself would be laid among his treasures and the men would set the sail and cast off the ship with the old king, quite alone on it. At the last moment the men would throw a burning torch onto the ship. And so from ashore they watched the burning ship which carried the old king to his death.

But the message of Christ, the message of love, also came to these warlike, fighting peoples, to the Germanic tribes. For instance, men like Winfred, called Boniface, went alone, unarmed, among the Germanic tribes and could speak with such warmth and power that, in time (and it took quite a long time) more and more of these warlike Germanic tribes became Christians.

These Germanic tribes were the ancestors of nearly all the nations who live today in western Europe. The English, French, Italians, Spaniards, lowland Scots, and of course the people of

Foreword

Charles Kovacs was a teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in Edinburgh for many years. The Waldorf/Steiner schools sprang from the pedagogical ideas and insights of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1864–1925). The curriculum aims to awaken much more than merely the intellectual development—it seeks to educate the whole being of the growing child, that each may develop their full human and spiritual potential.

During his time as a teacher Charles Kovacs wrote extensive notes of his lessons day by day. Since then these texts have been used and appreciated by teachers in Edinburgh and other Waldorf/Steiner schools for many years. This book represents the way one teacher taught a particular group of children, other teachers will find their own way of presenting the material. While some of the detail in this book may not be relevant in teaching history today in other countries, what is nevertheless interesting is how Kovacs picks out pertinent stories for the context in which he was teaching, and creates a tapestry showing the development of humankind from the collapse of the Roman Empire when Europe was plunged into the cultural desert of the Dark Ages to the Crusades where Europeans discovered new ideas and a refined civilization, to the awakening intellectual curiosity of the Renaissance which led to the discovery of new parts of the world, new artistic and religious forms as well as countless inventions.

This period of history is ideally suited for children around age 13, when in their own soul they experience a similar awakening and desire to widen their horizons and explore the world around them.

Astrid Maclean, Edinburgh 2004

Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Austria — although they speak different languages — they all are descendants of the Germanic tribes who once swept away the Roman Empire.

The story of how Christianity slowly and over centuries changed these fierce, quarrelsome, war-loving barbarians — that is the story of the Middle-Ages or medieval times which we shall look at.

Now, when these war-loving Germanic peoples became Christians they heard not only the story of Jesus Christ and his disciples — they heard of God, Father in Heaven and they heard of the Spirits who serve God Father and are His messengers and do His bidding. These servants of God are called angels and, higher than angels, are the archangels — and there are even higher beings still. Which of the angels and archangels would these war-loving Germanic peoples love best? Michael, of course, the great fighter for God, the fighter against the dragon. The Germanic peoples loved the Archangel Michael best because he is a fighter after their own heart. That is why so many of the first churches were called Church of St Michael (like Mont St Michel in France). These fierce, Germanic warriors learned that if they spoke an untruth, if they were dishonest, if they were lazy, if they were cowards — then they helped the dragon. But everyone who is truthful, honest, who does every task in life wholeheartedly, helps Michael to keep the dragon, the forces of evil down. That is why they loved the Archangel Michael, the Fighter for all that is good in the world. And we should love him as they did and feel ourselves to be companions of Michael.

2. Roman Law and Germanic Law

For the Germanic tribes fighting was a test of personal valour, while for the Romans fighting was a means to power. Just as their walk and their fighting differed, so there was a world of difference between justice as the Romans practiced it and the kind of justice which was common among the Germanic peoples.

The Romans made rules of law, and these rules were written down in law-books. And once a law was written in a book, the judge only had to read the book and he knew how to deal with any quarrel or complaint or question that was brought before him.

If a man was accused of having stolen something, if two peasants quarrelled about a piece of land, if two brothers could not agree how to divide money which their father had left them, the judge only had to look up the law in his books and he knew the decision he had to give. So the justice of Roman law was in books, in law-books.

But among the Germanic peoples it was quite different. Even when they became Christians they kept their old customs which were quite unlike the Roman law. They had no law-books and no judges and no lawyers; it was all quite different.

For instance, among the Anglo-Saxons, the Germanic tribes who had conquered the Britons and who had settled in the south of Britain, every two months or so, certain days were set apart. On those days no work was done and all men came together at a great gathering which was called a "Thing" (our word "thing" also means an "assembly" of different parts put together).

At such an assembly or Thing, there were all these tall, bearded men, standing in a large circle, leaning on their spears and shields — all grave-looking for this was a very serious event, and many a man might not come back alive from it.

On a kind of throne the master of the Thing sat, a noble lord or the King. When called out the first case began. Into the circle was brought a man accused of having stolen gold coins from another man. No one had seen him do it and the money had not been found on him. But the man who lost the money said that only this man was near the house when the gold coins disappeared.

Then the lord, the master of the Thing, called out: "Who is willing to swear an oath on behalf of the accused?"

And three men stepped forward. They swore by God that they knew the accused man well, that they knew him as an honest person who would not take another man's property. And then the master of the Thing called out again: "And who will swear against the accused?"

Now, if, say, five men came and swore that they knew the accused as a liar and dishonest person — so that three people had spoken for him and five against him — then the accused man would be considered guilty and would be hanged immediately as a thief.

But this time nobody stepped forward to swear against him, and with a loud voice the master of the Thing proclaimed him innocent.

And then came the next case. A young girl and a man came into the circle. The girl spoke: "I am Edith, the daughter of Eric the Rich, and this man is my brother, Tancred. When our father was dying he called Tancred to his side and said to him, I have great wealth, enough for both you and your sister. Half of all I have shall go to you Tancred and half to young Edith. Thus spoke my father, but as soon as he had died Tancred took possession of all — house, land, herds, treasure and slaves — and gave nothing to me."

But the girl had hardly finished when Tancred shouted, "She lies, our father left all to me alone!"

Now the master of the Thing spoke: "No man on earth can know what Eric the Rich said on his death-bed to his son. But God knows — and God can decide who speaks the truth. We call such a decision by God an *ordeal.** Are you Tancred, prepared to face an 'Ordeal,' a judgment by God?"

* Akin to the German *Urteil*, judgment.

"Yes I am," answered Tancred.

Then the master said: "It is our custom that such a case is decided by the 'Ordeal of Battle.' The girl, Edith, cannot fight for herself, is there a man who will fight the 'ordeal of battle' for her?"

And a young man came forward: "I am Winfred, I know the girl well and I am fond of her. I will fight for her."

The master called out: "Then Winfred and Tancred draw your swords and fight — and let God decide who is right."

The fight began, the swords clashed, steel rang against steel faster and faster the blows fell, and then Tancred, the girl's brother, cried out, blood gushed from a wound in his arm and the sword fell from his hand.

The master of the Thing shouted: "Enough — God has decided. You, Tancred must share your father's wealth, half and half, with your sister."

And then the next case came. A man, Harold was accused of having set fire to another man's house because of an old quarrel. The people in the house barely escaped with their lives and all their possessions were burnt. No one had seen Harold do it, but many people knew that he hated the owner of the house. And there was no one ready to come forward to swear for him. But Harold called out: "If no man here will speak for me, then I am willing to face the 'ordeal of fire' to prove my innocence."

Immediately some men brought a piece of iron, a plough-share. They made a blazing fire and held the plough-share in the flames until it was red hot. And then Harold, the accused walked to the fire and took the red-hot iron with his bare hands holding it high up for all to see.

There was no sound among all the men who watched him. Harold held up the iron until it cooled down and turned black. Then he dropped the plough-share and showed his hands — there is not a blister on them.

And a great shout went up: "God has decided! He passed the ordeal of fire, he is innocent!"

It is quite true and it happened many times; in those days people had such a strong faith in God that, if they were innocent, they were not harmed by the fiery heat, they could pass the

ordeal of fire. Sometimes, to prove their innocence, people put their arms in boiling hot oil, and were not hurt or harmed by it.

This ancient ordeal by fire was still practiced recently by certain tribes in Africa where men have been seen plunging their arms into a cauldron of boiling oil and drawing it out without harm.

So a meeting of this kind, a Thing, was not like a Roman court of law — there were no books, there was no written law, no judges or lawyers. People had to prove that they were in the right by deeds and not by long arguments.

Of course, modern courts of law are like the Roman courts — we have learned our laws from the Romans. And we no longer have the powers of these peoples of ancient times — we could no longer go through the ordeal of battle or the ordeal of fire. But in those days, about a thousand years ago, men proved by deeds that they spoke the truth, not by words or arguments.

3. The Monks

From these "ordeals" — ordeal of battle, ordeal of fire — we can see that the Germanic peoples had no use for Roman laws written in books. They had also no use for cities and towns — for instance, the Anglo-Saxons burnt down towns and cities, and destroyed the beautiful villas of the Romans. Not only houses and buildings disappeared under their onslaught but also all the arts — the beautiful statues and paintings — which the Romans had known. The Romans also had knowledge and science — they knew history and geography, and every educated Roman had a library with papyrus-roll books about all these things. The Germanic warriors had no use for these libraries, for the books — they could not read them and they were not interested in history or geography. And so not only Roman art, but also Roman knowledge disappeared.

The Roman way of life, Roman civilization was swept away, and the new masters of Europe, the Germanic tribes, had no civilization. They had only rough customs and a way of life in which a strong arm and a sharp sword counted more than anything else.

There would have been very little hope for a better way of life, for a new civilization to arise, if there had not been men who made it their task to work for better ways of life. These men were the Christian monks.

Remember Winfred, called Boniface, who went unarmed among the pagan tribes and who cut down the sacred oak of Thor and converted thousands of people to the Christian faith. But such monks as Winfred did not just baptize the pagans and teach them to say the Lord's Prayer, they worked slowly and gradually to bring civilization to these fierce warrior-people.

The Romans already had a civilization when they became Christians, but with the Germanic peoples civilization came —

very slowly indeed, but it came — with the Christian religion. And that was the work of these devoted men, the monks.

Let us see how these monks lived. When a man became a monk he had to make three vows. The first was a vow of obedience: from now on he was no longer his own master but always had to do what his superiors told him. The second vow was a vow of poverty: from now on he could no longer possess money or anything else. And the third vow was a vow of chastity, which means he would not marry and would not have a family of his own.

But by becoming a monk, he joined a new kind of family — the family of his fellow-monks. And as a sign of belonging to one family, the monks called each other "brother" — Brother Winfred, Brother Edgar. But as a real family has a father, so each group of monks had a father who was called "abbot" which comes from the Greek *abbas,* father.

The Abbot, the father, and the brother-monks under him lived in a monastery as one great family. In a real family a child may sometimes disobey the father, but a monk, sworn to obedience, never did.

Now let us take one monk, Brother Martin. When Martin decided to become a monk he first had to live as a "lay-brother": he shared the life of the monks without taking any vows. And if, after a time, he found that life in the monastery did not suit him, he could leave with the blessing of the monks. But, after three years as a lay-brother, Martin decided he liked the simple life, and he took the three vows of obedience, poverty, chastity.

When he had taken the vows, the monks shaved his beard — they also shaved his hair except for a fringe around the head. In those days men were very proud of their beard and hair which was worn down to their shoulders. By shaving his face and his head the monk showed that he was free of this vanity.

Then Martin was given monk's clothes — a single garment, called "habit," reaching from neck to ankles, held together at the waist by a cord; on the back of the neck was a cowl, a kind of hood. The habit was of a rough, coarse cloth, in brown or black. A monk wore nothing under the habit, and he wore the same habit summer or winter. Our word "habit" which means doing

the same things always, comes from the monk's garment which was always the same.

When Brother Martin had been "shriven" (beard and hair shaven) and had put on his habit, the monks now led him to his "cell," his own bedroom. But these cells were narrow, small cubicles — and they were not only tiny but also bare of any furniture except a wooden cot. For the rest of his life Brother Martin would sleep on this plain wooden cot without mattress and without pillow — that was the rule of the monks.

Life in the monastery was ruled by the words *ora et labora,* "pray and work." For Martin there was no amusement or entertainment, his waking life was work and prayer. He was not even allowed to sleep without interruption. At midnight the bells rang to waken Martin, and he joined his brother monks to say prayers and sing hymns for a full hour. Then the monks went back to their cells to sleep again until six o'clock in the morning when after prayers they had breakfast together in the big hall of the monastery called refectory. And then they all went to work.

The monks of a monastery did not buy anything, they made all they needed themselves. There were monks who tended the gardens, monks who were carpenters, others who made the habits, and others who made the sandals they all wore.

But there was also other work. In those days there were no doctors to look after sick people. Only the monks had preserved something of the medical knowledge of ancient Rome and only monks cared for the sick and ailing. They made brews from herbs, made ointments and they looked after suffering people.

Poor people and old people who had no relatives to look after them, could starve and die of hunger — nobody cared. It was only the monks who would give food to anyone who knocked on their door.

There were also no schools of any kind. The monks were the only people who could read or write. Even kings and great lords could neither read nor write; they kept a monk to write letters for them or to read to them any letters they received. The old word for a priest or monk is "clerk," and today we still call office-workers "clerks" because they can write.

If a new monk like Brother Martin wanted to learn to read,

the only books to learn from were from Roman times and were in Latin — even the Bible was only in Latin — he had to learn Latin. So although the Roman Empire had gone, its language, Latin, remained the language of all educated people, the monks and the priests.

When Brother Martin learned to write, his fellow monks discovered that he wrote beautifully, and so he was told that his work would be in a special workshop of the monastery called a 'scriptorium."

In the scriptorium the monks first prepared sheepskins with great care, scraping them until the skins were fine and smooth so that one could write on them. Paper was unknown, only these prepared sheepskins called parchment were used for writing.

On this parchment Martin wrote slowly and carefully with quills. He copied the holy books, the Bible and legends of holy men; he and his brother-monks also copied books of Roman times which had, somehow, been saved — so that the wisdom of Rome and Greece would not be completely forgotten.

The first letter of a new chapter was often painted in glowing colours and often fine gold-leaf was used for ornaments; some monks like Brother Martin could also draw and paint beautiful illustrations. It took years to complete such a book. Every book was a thing of great value and was treated as a treasure.

A monastery in those days was not only a place of worship and prayers, it was also a seat of learning, of knowledge, and of art and beauty. A monastery was like a little island of culture.

4. Roman Wealth and Germanic Wealth

With the Germanic tribes we saw that even for justice each man relied on his own strength in the ordeal of battle, on his own courage in the ordeal of fire. You had to prove by your own deeds that you were right.

Strength in battle and courage was the thing they respected most. Not only honour — but wealth and riches too came to those who had fought most bravely in battles. But wealth, riches, among the Germanic tribes became something quite different from what the Romans called wealth, or what we in our time call wealth.

We call a people rich if they have a lot of money which today they can keep in a bank, though in Roman times there were no such things as banks. If a man was rich and had plenty of money he had to keep it in great chests locked up in a vault in his cellar. Money in the olden days was only gold, silver, copper coins, for there was no paper-money. A rich Roman had chests full of gold coins and silver coins in the vaults of his cellar.

And of course, the Emperor in Rome had the greatest treasure of all — we can hardly imagine the countless chests with gold coins and silver coins which the Roman Emperors possessed — because all the people of the Roman Empire had to pay taxes to them.

But the Emperor could not use all this gold and silver for his own pleasure, though a good deal of it he spent for his own luxuries. The hundreds of thousands of soldiers who guarded the Roman Empire had to be paid by the Emperor. They fought for him because he paid them well. In later times the soldiers for the most part were not Romans at all, but were from many other nations, Greek, Egyptian, Germanic, and had joined the legions for money and for no other reason.

When a foreign soldier had been in the Roman legions for ten or twenty years, he could save quite a lot of money, and then retire. He often went to a nice, sunny climate in the east of Europe, Asia Minor or Egypt. And so for several hundred years the money from the treasure-chests in Rome went east. The food for the great city of Rome also came from the east (Egypt, Syria), and money for it went east. And in time, the treasure-chests in Rome became empty and neither the noble Romans nor the Emperor had much gold left.

One could really say that the Roman Empire collapsed because the Roman rulers no longer had enough money to pay foreign soldiers to fight for them. All the gold had gone east and there was hardly any gold left in the West, in Europe.

And so when the Roman Empire fell apart and was overrun by the Germanic tribes there was very little money left in the whole of Europe. Europe was terribly short of money of any kind, gold or silver — even copper was rare. Business and trade nearly stopped; in the villages people made what they needed.

How could, for instance, a King of the Anglo-Saxons who had conquered a part of Roman Britain reward the brave warriors who had fought for him? He could not say, "Here is a Roman treasure-chest. I shall divide the gold coins among the warriors," he could not say so because there were no treasure-chests any more. But he could do something else: He would say: "All the lands we have conquered, the fields and the forests, the rivers and the hills, all belong to me, for I am the leader and king. And I will reward you, my faithful warriors, for your brave deeds. Those who have fought best will each be given a large tract of land, and the others will get smaller pieces of land."

And so it came that wealth meant not money, but possession of land. And the greatest wealth — the largest pieces of land — went to those who had fought most bravely in battle.

Later we shall hear about noblemen, lords and dukes, barons and knights, but at first "noblemen" were just warriors who had fought bravely in battle and had become the owners of large tracts of land, masters of big estates. A nobleman, a knight or a lord in these early days was someone who had a large estate given to him by the King.

But there was something else. When the King gave land to a man he said: "Because I have given you the land you must swear on oath that you will always be ready to come to my aid when I need your strong arm and sword again. You must swear that you will always obey me as your lord and master. If you disobey me, or turn against me, I will take the land away from you and give it to someone else."

And so these warriors who were given land by the king swore an oath of loyalty, an oath of "fealty" as it was called, to the king.

A man who had been given land by the king and sworn the oath of fealty was called a "knight" which comes from the same word as the German word *Knecht,* "a servant." A knight means the servant of a king because he had sworn to serve the king.

This is how the proud knights of the Middle Ages, such knights as the knights of King Arthur, all began. It began because the kings could give no other rewards to their followers but land, for there was no money to give — the Romans had spent all the gold. In return the knights swore an oath of fealty.

But a knight who was given such a big estate — acres and acres of land — would not work the land himself. It was far too big for one man and his family, and more importantly, the knight was a warrior, a fighter, not a peasant. Fighting was considered among the Germanic tribes a much nobler occupation than working the land, ploughing and harvesting or herding. A warrior-knight would never do such a thing. After all, he had even gained the estate by fighting, he was given land for brave deeds in battle, not for hard work in the fields.

And so the knight who owned the land did not work in the fields himself. But he said to other men: "I give you some of the land if you swear an oath of fealty to me and fight for me whenever I call you to arms." And so each knight had men who were his followers and worked for him and fought for him. They were his vassals as he was a vassal to the king.

And the knights needed armed followers, ready to fight for their masters. For it was quite common in those days that one knight who was not satisfied with his own possessions, with his own land, attacked another one to take land and possessions

away from him. It was again like an ordeal: you had to prove by battle, by fighting, that you and your followers were strong enough to hold what you owned. If you lost, it just showed you were not worthy to own the land.

So if you called any property your own, you always had to be ready to fight for it, and you could only hold it by strength.

That is why you had to be strong and have strong men to fight for you, to be wealthy. And such a strong, wealthy man was a knight.

5. The Feudal System

All things changed when the Roman Empire fell apart and was overrun by the Germanic tribes. Even money became rare — nearly all the gold and silver had gone. And another thing that disappeared were cities.

These fierce warrior people, the Germanic tribes, did not like to live crowded together as city people live. When the Anglo-Saxons took a town or a city they did not settle down in it — they had no use for the big houses and villas — they burnt them down and destroyed them. The only thing they used were the door-hinges: they took them off and made spear-heads of them.

Then they went and built the kind of dwelling they liked; they cut down oak-trees in the great forests, sawed them into planks and from these planks built little huts. Such a hut had just one room with a fire in the middle, one opening in the wall for a door and an opening in the straw-thatched roof to let the smoke out; that was all.

A collection of such huts was a village; the Germanic people did not mind living together in a little community, in a small village, miles away from the next village. Every family in the village had its own little plot of land, and there was also a piece of land called the "common." That was grazing land which belonged to all of them and where each family could put their cows and sheep for grazing.

But such a little village was always in danger of being attacked by a knight who wanted more land. He might come with his armed men killing any who tried to resist, and then take possession of the land.

So to find protection against such attacks, the peasants went to the nearest knight, the nearest great landowner who had armed men, and said: "Please, will you with your armed men protect us."

Now such a knight was always willing to do this, but at a price. The price he demanded was this: first, the peasants had to give a part of their crop to him; secondly, on certain days they had to work for him on *his* land; and thirdly, they had to fight for him when he wanted it. The peasants had no choice but to agree. Now they had protection, but they had lost their freedom. The knight had become their master.

This happened everywhere in Europe — in Britain, in France, in Italy, in Spain, the noblemen, the great landowners, the knights had peasants who owed them allegiance, who were in their fealty as the noblemen were in fealty to the king.

Such peasants who were in fealty to a knight were called "villains." Today we use the word "villain" to mean a wicked, evil person. But, originally, it meant a man living in a "village," a poor man of low standing. And the knight and master was called "lord" which really means "one who is in charge of the bread loaves," the man to whom we owe the loaf of bread we eat.*

There was the lord and the villains, or peasants. But there was a third kind of people who were even worse off than the villains — the serfs. The villains at least had a piece of land which they could call their own. The serfs had no land at all, and a person who had no land counted for nothing. The serfs belonged to the lord, to their knight, just as the cattle belonged to him. The serfs were nearly as badly off as the slaves in ancient Rome, except for one thing: they could not be bought or sold like slaves. But if the lord sold or gave away a piece of land, the serfs who happened to live there were sold with it, they were considered as part of the land. They could never go away or run away: if they did and were caught they were punished by death. The villains too were not allowed to leave their lord and anyone who tried and was caught lost his life.

This kind of order with the King as the highest, below the knights in fealty to him, below that the villains who owed fealty to the knights, and further below the serfs, this order is called the "feudal system," (feudal comes from fealty).

* Old English *hlaf*, loaf, and *weard*, warden, so *hlaford* was bread-warden, and this word became "lord."

Now we shall see how these people on the "feudal" system lived. While a Roman patrician would build himself a beautiful, comfortable villa without fear of attack, a knight lived in an age when only one's own strength could give protection, when other knights could come and attack at any time. And so the lord built himself a castle on a hill. From a hill you can see enemies approaching when they are still far off, and it is much harder to attack going up a steep slope.

The castle consisted of a high tower, called the "keep." The keep was the dwelling of the lord and his family. Around the keep was a great courtyard. In the courtyard was the water-well (every drop of water needed in the keep had to be carried up from the well). In the courtyard were also stables for horses and barns to store food, as well as the kitchen (and every plate of food for the keep had to be carried across the courtyard and up the tower).

The courtyard was surrounded by a thick, high wall with watch-towers on it. The wall had only one opening, one gate which had an iron lattice-work barrier which could be let down at a moment's notice, this was called a portcullis. Around the wall was a deep ditch, a moat with a drawbridge to cross it. At night or when enemies approached the bridge was drawn up.

The high tower or keep had several floors. On the first floor was the lord's bodyguard, so that enemies would first meet this bodyguard when they reached the keep. On the second floor was the hall where the lord, his family and his warriors all had their meals together. On the third floor was the bedroom of the lord and lady. They had no cupboards; clothes were hung on a pole in the wall. All these rooms in the keep were cold and draughty. The windows had no glass but only wooden shutters to keep the rain and snow out.

In the banqueting hall on the second floor, the table for the lord and his family stood higher than the table of the others. People used spoons and knives, but no forks; they cut a piece of meat and took it in their fingers. People used to eat a lot of meat. Most of the vegetables we now have were unknown then. Also farming was still very crude and primitive: there was never enough hay to feed all the cattle through the winter. So in

autumn many cows and oxen were killed and the meat was put in barrels with brine (salt water) to keep. And right through the winter they would eat this strongly salted meat. But after a time this salted meat did not keep well and had a nasty smell when it was served. So, during the winter months a meal in a knight's banqueting hall was not very pleasant. After the meal, musicians called minstrels played and most lords had a jester who kept the company amused with pranks and jokes.

The medieval castle was quite different from a Roman house, it was not at all comfortable. It was really a little fortress which was necessary in a time when what a man could take by force became his property by right, when might was right.

When enemies approached, villains and serfs brought their families as well as the herds of cattle into the castle courtyard to find protection behind the thick walls.

So it was not an easy, comfortable life for the lords, the knights, and it was even harder for the villains and serfs. There was very little comfort and always the threat of war. But these people believed that only in fighting could a man prove his worth — and they looked up to the knights who trained for nothing but fighting.

But the feudal system gave at least some protection to the peasants — the lord, the loaf-giver did protect his villains and serfs against being robbed by other knights.

6. Knighthood

The life of a serf or villain in the feudal system seems quite terrible to us. Neither serf nor villain could leave their lord — they were in fealty to him all their lives, that is they owed him absolute obedience. When the lord approached, the serfs or peasants not only took off their caps to wish him a good day, they also touched their forelock (the hair in front) as a sign of obedience. Without any pay they worked two or three days a week for him on his fields and brought him the crops, the meat and the milk he and his fighting men wanted. Some men worked in the castle as kitchen-boys or servants and some girls as lady's maids, cleaners or cooks and they considered themselves lucky, for they were spared the hard work in the fields. It may seem very hard to us, but strange as it may sound, most serfs and villains in these early times of the Middle Ages were quite content, for the lord *did* give them protection. He saw to it that old servants were looked after — if a villain was sick the lady of the castle came with herbs of some kind. So in some ways a knight with his villains and serfs was like a great family, and if necessary, the villains fought bravely for their lord.

The lord, the knight, was brought up to know that he had duties in the world, and before he could give orders to others he had first to learn obedience himself. Let us see how a knight was brought up. First of all only the son of a knight could become a knight himself — but he had to earn the proud name of "knight."

Let us take one such son of a knight, Godfrey, the son of Sir Baldwin. Up to the age of seven, Godfrey was left with his mother, Lady Mary; from his mother he learned to say his prayers, he heard from her stories of brave heroes and of kind saints. But when he was seven years old, young Godfrey had to leave his home, the castle where his father and mother lived,

and was sent to another knight, for no youngster was allowed to learn the rules of knighthood from his own father.

And so Godfrey, once he was seven years old was sent many days journey away from his home to Sir Hugh the Redbeard, a famous fighter but a man with a wild temper. Here Godfrey became a page. But being a page to Hugh the Redbeard was not an easy matter. Godfrey had to run errands not only for Sir Hugh (who shouted wildly at poor Godfrey if he did not run fast enough) but also for every other knight or lady in the castle. He also had to serve food and drink at meal-times, and there was trouble for Godfrey if Sir Hugh's cup was not filled as soon as it was empty. When Sir Hugh mounted his horse, Godfrey had to be there to hold his stirrups and when Sir Hugh returned from a hunt or a fight, Godfrey had to help him dismount and lead the horse to the stable. But besides all this, Godfrey had to practice every day for several hours with sword and spear, with bow and arrow. And if he was not quick enough in learning a new trick in sword-play or missed his target with bow and arrow, he was told off by the knights. There was no such excuse as "I am tired." A page — a future knight — had no business to be tired.

For seven years, from the age of seven to fourteen, Godfrey was a page to Sir Hugh. But, at long last, after his fourteenth birthday, he took another step and became a squire. As a reward for his services as page, Sir Hugh gave him sword, spear, shield, armour and a horse of his own. That was a wonderful day for Godfrey. From now on he rode by Sir Hugh's side both for hunting and for fighting. His first battle, where he had to fight for his life, was at Sir Hugh's side. As well as his own, he had to keep Sir Hugh's armour clean and shiny and to look after his master's horse. He had to learn to show courtesy to ladies, to show respect to older people, and good manners at table. But still he had to practice with his weapons — for skill with weapons was the most important thing in becoming a knight.

Godfrey was a squire for another seven years. And only then, after fourteen years of training as page and squire, when he reached the age of twenty-one, there came the great day when Godfrey was to be made a knight.

It was a great ceremony. First of all, squire Godfrey took a bath (that was something special, people did not bathe often in their lives in those days). The bath on that day was really to remind Godfrey that he entered the order of knighthood with a clean, pure soul, a soul not made "dirty" by untruthfulness, dishonesty or cowardice.

Then Godfrey had to spend the next twenty-four hours fasting, without food or drink, for in those days people believed one could pray to God better, if the body was not filled with food. And when Godfrey had fasted for a whole day he was led to a church where he was left alone for a whole night, kneeling before the candle-lit altar, praying all night to God to make him a worthy knight.

And in the morning Godfrey was led to the great banqueting hall in the castle; there stood Sir Hugh and his knights, all in splendid dress; and Godfrey kneeled down before Sir Hugh and clasped Sir Hugh's hands and swore the three great vows of knighthood: First, that he would always protect the Christian faith and the Christian Church; secondly, that he would always protect widows, orphans and those in need of his help; and thirdly, that he would only fight in a good and noble cause (that is not for wicked or silly reasons). And when he had sworn the three vows, Sir Hugh took his sword and gently struck Godfrey with the flat side on the right shoulder and said: "I dub thee knight. Rise, Sir Godfrey." Godfrey stood up, proud and happy, from now on he was Sir Godfrey, a knight. And now he was given golden spurs — the sign of a noble knight.

After this solemn ceremony was over, there was a special celebration of this great day, a tournament. When the knights were not fighting in earnest, they had, at least, to fight for sport, and such a fighting for sport was called a tournament.

There was a covered pavilion from which the ladies and the older knights could watch as the younger knights tested their strength against each other on the field in front of them.

First of all each knight who took part in the tournament chose a lady in whose honour he would fight that day, asking her for a "token" — either a kerchief, or a glove — which the knight wore on his shoulder.

For a tournament the tips of the spears were blunted, but otherwise the knights were in armour as for a real battle. And then two knights galloped their horses against each other and tried to strike the opponent's shield with their spears with such force that the other man was thrown off his horse. Sometimes both fell off, then it was a draw. But if one knight stayed in the saddle and the other fell off, the victor rode proudly to the clapping ladies and handed the token back to the lady of his choice and she thanked him with a kiss for having done so well in her honour.

Sir Godfrey, the new knight, had chosen the youngest daughter of Sir Hugh the Redbeard as his lady of honour. Young Lady Jane blushed crimson when the proud new knight bowed before her and asked for a token, and there was great laughter around her, for all lords and ladies knew she had for months spoken of nothing else but Godfrey and what a fine knight he would make. With her trembling hands she gave him her white glove and Godfrey rode off with the glove on his shoulder.

No lady watched with more anxiety than young Lady Jane when Godfrey's turn came. His opponent was an experienced knight who had gained honours in real battles, as well as many tournaments, so few of the spectators expected Godfrey to win.

The two knights galloped fiercely against each other with such force that both stout spears broke and splintered, but both men stayed in the saddle. So new spears were brought and they spurred their horses a second time against each other. This time when the spears crashed on the shields, the other knight lost his balance on the horse ... for a few seconds he waved his arms to gain his balance, but the heavy armour was too much for him and he came crashing down.

There were great cheers in the pavilion and Godfrey rode proudly back to collect his reward from Lady Jane who was too overjoyed to blush this time. And when an old knight whispered to Sir Hugh: "He would make a fine son-in-law," the fierce Redbeard grinned and said: "By Our Lady, the rascal would — and he has my blessing!"

7. Christian Europe

If we think back to the time when the Germanic tribes conquered the Roman Empire, the fierce warriors who, at the beginning of a battle roared their war-cries into their shields, could go fighting mad. It was called "going berserk" when a warrior in battle got so wild that he no longer knew what he was doing. Now compare them with a knight like Sir Godfrey.

You can see that a great change has taken place. While there was still the fighting spirit, reading or writing, for instance, played no part in a knight's education. But now the fighting spirit was more tamed; a knight had certain rules. He had to protect widows and orphans, he could not fight for an unjust cause, for evil reasons, and he had to show courtesy to ladies. And all this shows that something much finer, much nobler had entered the human souls. What was it that had brought about this change from savage warriors to noble knights? It was the Christian religion.

The Christian Spirit had begun to work on the souls; it could not change them quickly, but there were already some changes in people's hearts. Think of the rules of knighthood, think of Squire Godfrey fasting and praying a whole night on the eve of becoming a knight, then you can see how in the rules of *chivalry* the old fighting spirit and the Christian spirit came together. The word "chivalry" comes from the French *cheval*, horse, because a knight rode on a horse into battle, while the villains fought on foot. But "chivalry" soon had another meaning: it meant noble behaviour, behaviour fit for a knight, brave in the face of danger but considerate, kind and courteous to ladies, young children, old people. And it was Christianity which had transformed the fighting fury of the Germanic people into chivalry.

And the people of that time, from the lowest serf to the most

powerful king, all felt that it was Christianity which had made them better people than they had been before; they said: "it is Christ himself who makes us better human beings — it is the power of Christ which makes us truly human."

And that is why they all, serfs, villains, knights and kings loved their religion, loved their Christian faith with their whole heart. Religion was the most important part of their lives. You can see it from the churches they built. The homes they built for themselves were very simple indeed. The serfs and villains lived in crude wooden huts, the castle of a knight was much more a fortress than a comfortable home; but no expense, no work, no effort was too great when it came to building their church. People did not mind living in hovels themselves as long as their church was beautiful.

And they all looked up with the greatest respect to the servants of the Church, the monks and priests whom they regarded as holy men. The monks and priests were also the wisest men, for they knew Latin, could read the Bible, made these wonderful books, and they had all the knowledge.

The serfs and the villains gave part of their crop to their lord, but another part — one tenth, "a tithe" — they gave to the Church. Even if the peasants themselves went short and had hardly enough — a part would always go to the Church. And the wealthy lords and kings would make regular gifts, of land, of herds, even of money, to the monasteries and churches.

Now the monks owed obedience to their abbot, but the abbots owed obedience to the bishops, and all bishops owed obedience to the Pope in Rome. So the ordinary people looked up to their local monks and priests, who in turn looked up to the highest priest, the "Holy Father," the Pope in Rome. Thus Rome again became a centre of power, but not like ancient Rome the power of the sword, — now it was the power of faith.

The Pope in Rome had no soldiers, but even the most powerful king would not dare go against the wishes of the Pope — so great was the power of faith, of religion, in those days. There were many kingdoms in Europe, but they all looked up to the Pope in Rome.

At that time when the Christian faith had such power over

people's souls, there arose in the East a new religion, a religion that was to become an enemy and danger to Christianity.

The Asian shore of the Red Sea is a large peninsula, called Arabia, which is one of the most desolate, dead and empty lands on earth, for it is nearly all desert. Red-yellow rocks and sand stretch as far as the eye can see; in places the winds have heaped the sand together in dunes, which are forever shifting and moving. The sky is deep-blue and only rarely is there a cloud in this blue sky and almost never a drop of rain. During the day the sun burns down on the dry sand and the sands reflect the heat back, and there is no tree, no bird, no little stream, but only the deep silence of the desert.

Only here and there, miles from the next, there is a well with water in the ground, surrounded by date-palms. Such a tiny spot of life in the desert is called an oasis. Travelling from one oasis to the next you may find, now and then, the bleached bones of a camel or of a horse, or even of a luckless man who died of thirst before he could reach an oasis.

This desert is the home of nomadic tribes as fierce as the desert itself. These are the Arabs. It was here in the desert, and among the Arabs that the new religion, the religion of Muhammad, or Islam arose, which, at one time, threatened to sweep over Europe and to blot out Christianity.

8. Muhammad

rabia with its burning deserts is quite different from the cool, ıady forests and green fields where the Germanic people lived. ut Arabia is not all desert. Along the coast of the peninsula ıere is rainfall, and where there is rain, the earth becomes nazingly fertile.

There is grass giving excellent grazing for herds, and rare and aluable plants grow there. Frankincense (one of the gifts of the ıagi) is the resin, the hardened sap of a little tree that grows nly in Arabia, and myrrh, too, is the resin of an Arabian tree. rankincense gives a sweet smell when it is burned. It is used for ıense in church in honour of God, but much earlier, Greeks nd Romans used it in their temples. Myrrh too, gives a refresh- ng scent, and was used by the Egyptians for embalming the nummies.

In this fertile part the Arabs kept herds of sheep, camels and ıorses. They always had a great love for horses, and they bred a ind of fast racing horse, with slender neck and long, slender egs which is the ancestor of all racing horses used today. The Arabs were master story-tellers with a great imagination. Think of the stories of Aladdin and his lamp, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Sinbad the Sailor from *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights.*

The Arabs wear the right kind of clothes for their hot coun- try: loose white cotton cloaks and a white head-cloth to protect them from the scorching sun. While the day in Arabia is burn- ing hot, at night time it gets cool, suddenly and sharply. And in the dry, clear night air you see the stars in the sky shining more brightly and clearly than you ever see them in Europe. It seems as if you only had to climb the next hill to touch them, so bright and near do they look in the desert. For untold generations the Arabs worshipped the stars, and the moon. The shining stars in

the heavens — the silvery light of the moon, these were the gods which they worshipped.

And the most holy thing for these star-worshippers was a stone that had fallen from heaven. We would call it a mete- orite, a shooting star. A meteorite is really something that comes from the world of the stars to the earth. On some nights you can see showers of them. They burn when they come into the earth's atmosphere, and that is the light we see. Most of them are burnt up before they ever reach the earth, but some- times the meteorite is quite large and although a part of it is burnt, there is still a piece left when it hits the ground. When examined it is found to be iron. The shooting stars, the mete- orites which come to us from the world of the stars are always iron.

For the Arabs, such a piece of iron that had come from the stars was the most holy thing. It was kept in the holy city called Mecca where they made a special building for that holy stone, a building shaped like a cube. This building was called the Kaaba.

And it was the custom of every Arab at least once a year to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca and go into the Kaaba, the cube-shaped building, where there was the black stone and around the stone were carved figures of the star-gods — and there he worshipped the star-gods and the holy stone.

Now about six hundred years after the birth of Christ (AD 570) a boy called Muhammad was born in Mecca, in this holy city. His parents died when he was still young and so Muhammad was brought up by an uncle. It was not a rich fam- ily and Muhammad had soon to make himself useful. He first had to work as a shepherd and later on he became a camel-driver with the caravans, the group of travellers who joined together for journeys across the desert.

Now Muhammad had been brought up to worship the stars, but on his journeys he met people who had different religions, he met Jews and Christians. And he began to wonder which was the true religion, which was the true god. Was the Arab belief in the star-gods wrong?

Then Muhammad married; his wife was rich and he

became rich himself through this marriage and he now had time for this question which worried him more than anything else.

In the end he decided he could only find a true answer to his question if he were quite alone, far from other people. So he went far out into the desert until he found a little cave. And there he stayed, alone with his thoughts and with his questions.

And suddenly he saw a great light, and in the light an angel. And Muhammad was so terrified of this vision that he ran away and hurried home. But at home the angel again appeared to him and spoke to him. The angel said: "The one and only true God wants you to lead your people, the Arabs, away from the worship of idols and stars — you are His chosen prophet to teach them the true God."

Muhammad was at first not at all prepared to follow the command of the angel, but he had more and more visions; he saw countless angels, he saw not only one heaven but seven heavens, one above the other, and in the end he accepted that he was indeed chosen to be the Prophet of God, of Allah, as God is called in Arabic.

At first only his own family, his wife, his uncle, believed in him; the other people of Mecca turned against him, and he had to flee for his life. But among other Arab tribes he found followers who were even willing to fight for him. For several years there was strife and battle among the Arabs — those who were for and those who were against Muhammad.

The leader of Muhammad's enemies, a man called Omar decided to murder Muhammad. Armed with a dagger he succeeded in getting into Muhammad's tent. But as Omar lifted the dagger to strike, Muhammad looked at him calmly, without saying a word — and Omar could not strike. He dropped the dagger and fell on his knees before Muhammad and cried out: "Allah is great and you are indeed his prophet." Omar became a faithful follower and later, a great leader of the Arabs.

Soon all the Arab tribes acknowledged Muhammad as Prophet of Allah and he entered Mecca in triumph. The carved statues of the Gods in the Kaaba were destroyed but the black stone from Heaven, so declared Muhammad, was to remain

holy. The Kaaba at Mecca is a place of pilgrimage for all followers of Muhammad still today.

Muhammad died at the age of 62 in Mecca commanding his successors to: "Spread my religion to all peoples of the world, and spread it with fire and sword." And that is what they did.

9. The Crescent of Islam

ll the sayings of Muhammad — the visions he had seen of ıgels and of the heavens, and all the rules of life which he had ven to his followers (who are called Muslims) — were written own in a book called the Koran. The Koran is the holy book for ıe Muslims as the Bible is for Christians, but they perhaps pay ıore respect to the Koran than Christians do to the Bible, as can e seen from a little story.

The Arab leaders who came after Muhammad, his succesors, were called Caliphs. One day a slave served the Caliph Ali dish of soup and the poor slave had the misfortune of dropping the whole plate of scalding hot soup on his master. Shaking vith fear for his life the slave fell to his knees and cried: "It is vritten in the Koran that the Blessing of Allah is on the man vho controls his anger."

"I am not angry," said the Caliph.

The slave continued: "It is also written in the Holy Book that Allah will reward those who forgive any harm done to them."

"I forgive you," said the Caliph.

But the slave went on: "It also says in the Koran that Allah's highest blessing is for those who return a good deed for an evil deed."

"You shall have your freedom and hundred pieces of gold," said the Caliph.

So you see how the Koran was respected by the Muslims. They call their own religion Islam, which means "service." The most important rule of Islam, the most important prayer which must be said five times a day — but which was also their battle-cry is: *La Ilaha Il Allah Muhammad Ar-Rasool Allah* — which means "God is God and Muhammad is his prophet." You can still hear it chanted in a strange tune from minarets, the high towers of the mosques in any Muslim city five times a day.

Some of the rules of Islam may seem very strange to us: for instance a man can marry more than one wife, he can have up to four wives. A woman must keep her hair covered, and stricter Muslim women even keep their face hidden under a veil in the presence of any man except her husband. A woman's beauty is for her husband and for no one else.

But there is one rule which had the greatest influence on history. Muhammad had commanded that it was the duty of every Muslim to convert other people, pagans, Christians, Jews, to Islam. If they could be persuaded to become Muslims, well and good. But if words were no use, then they must be forced; as Muhammad said: "Convert them with fire and sword." And it is written in the Koran that any Muslim who dies fighting for Islam, for his religion, will go straight to heaven, to everlasting joy, no matter how wicked or sinful he was in life.

Before Muhammad the Arabs had lived contentedly in their desert lands; but now fired by this command, they came forth from Arabia to conquer the world for Islam.

Muhammad had given his followers a flag; it was a green flag with a white crescent moon on it and a white star. They had worshipped the moon and the stars long before Muhammad; now they had the moon and star again but as signs of the new religion, Islam.

The buildings where Allah is worshipped, called mosques, are also moonlike — they have rounded domes like upside-down half moons, and on top of the dome is the sign of the crescent moon. Even the Arab swords, called scimitars, were curved like a crescent moon. As Christianity has as its sign the cross, Islam has as its sign the crescent moon.

It was with the sign of the half-moon before them that the sons of the desert set out on their wars of conquest. Following their green flag with the white moon and star, riding their fleet-footed desert horses, brandishing their curved swords and with the war-cry *la Ilaha il-Allah* on their lips, the Arabs stormed into battle with utter fearlessness, for death in battle was for them a sure way to earn eternal joy in heaven. The soldiers sent against them and who fought only for money could not stand against

ese wild, fanatical horsemen. Army after army sent against the abs were scattered, city after city surrendered.

Now it is very interesting to see which countries were con-ered by the Arabs. To the north there was a remnant of cient Rome — the Eastern Roman Empire with its great capi-Constantinople which ruled all the eastern part of the editerranean including the Holy Land, and the holy city, usalem. It was an empire of great wealth, of flourishing trade, gold and treasure. It was, of course, Christian land, although e people of the Eastern Roman Empire did not accept the thority of the Pope in Rome. It was an empire where much of e knowledge, the wisdom of ancient Greece and Rome was ll alive, where beautiful churches were built and beautiful ages were made of little coloured stones, called mosaics. But ese cultured people of the Eastern Roman Empire did not ht — they preferred to pay others to fight for them. But their nies were scattered and beaten; the Holy Land and Jerusalem l to the Arabs. Only at Constantinople itself did the Arabs p; they could not take it.

But the Arabs did not trouble about Constantinople; they ned west and conquered Egypt. They stormed on and took e whole coast of North Africa until they came to the strait ere Spain and Africa are close together. The Arab leader, their neral in this part was called Tariq ibn Ziyad. The Arabs ssed from Africa to Spain in boats and Tariq, the general, was e first to set foot on the great rock on the other side. From that ne onwards this rock which the Romans had called the Pillar Hercules was called Tariq's Mountain, in Arabic Jebel-Tariq; d it is still called Gibraltar to this day. Later it became British, t the name still honours the Arab leader who first set foot in rope.

The people of Spain who were devout Christians fought ively, but they too were defeated. Only a small remnant in the leys and mountains of the Pyrenees remained free and kept a le kingdom of their own. But all the lands which we now call ain and Portugal came under Arab dominion, under the minion of Islam, the religion of Muhammad.

If we look at the lands conquered by the Muslims from

Constantinople south, the whole North Africa coast and to Spain in the north again, these lands form roughly a crescent moon around Europe.

The Arab swords were moon-shaped, the domes of the mosques were moon-shaped, there was a moon on their flag, and their conquests too, formed a great arc, a crescent moon.

10. Arabian Civilization

In the beginning the Christian faith was not spread by force; the early Christians did not even fight to defend themselves against the persecutions. Yet in spite of the persecutions, more and more people in the Roman Empire became Christians. Like a candle-flame the light of Christ went from heart to heart, and conquered Rome without force. Later, when Winfred felled the sacred oak of Thor, he did not have an army of soldiers for his protection. He went alone and unarmed among the pagans and converted them by the strength of faith in his own heart, without force.

By contrast, Islam was spread by fire and sword. Countless dead marked the path of the Arab victories — Islam was spread by force.

Yet the Arabs could also be amazingly generous to their vanquished enemies. Like the desert which changes from the scorching heat of the day to the refreshing coolness of night, so these sons of the desert could quite suddenly change from blood-thirsty fury to calm, generous and noble behaviour, as the following story shows.

Omar, the man who had once tried to murder Muhammad, later became a great leader and Caliph of the Muslims. He continued the Arab conquests in the east and led his warriors against the great kingdom of Persia. The people of Persia were not Christians, they worshipped Ahuramazda, the god of sunlight. But the Persians, too, could not withstand the terrible onslaught of the Arabs and were defeated. Their last king, Harmosan, was brought as a prisoner before Caliph Omar.

Omar asked him: "Do you now recognize that our god, Allah, is stronger than yours?"

"No," answered Harmosan, "only that our armies were weaker than yours."

"Then prepare yourself to die!" shouted the enraged Omar.

"I am ready," said the Persian. "But as a last favour, may I have a drink of water?"

Omar made a sign that the prisoner was given a cup of water. Harmosan took the cup ... but then hesitated and did not drink.

"Are you afraid the drink might be poisoned?" asked the Caliph Omar. "Fear not, we Arabs do not poison our enemies. You shall enjoy your last drink and I swear by Muhammad — may his name be praised for ever — that no harm shall come to you until you have drunk the water in this cup."

Harmosan looked steadily at the Caliph and said: "I hold you to this promise, Omar," and then he threw the cup to the ground so that all the water was spilled in the dust.

"I understand my life is safe until I have drunk the water that was in that cup," said Harmosan, "but I will never drink it now — it has gone."

For a moment Omar's face went red with fury — but then he said: "What I have sworn I have sworn, and what I promise, I keep." He spared Harmosan's life and even let him go free.

As long as they were fighting and conquering new lands, the Arabs were merciless, but once a country had come under their dominion, they showed great tolerance to the vanquished. For instance, when Jerusalem, the Holy City, was taken, most people of the city embraced the religion of Muhammad. But the Jews and the Christians who refused were allowed to worship in their own way. Not only this, Christian pilgrims from Europe were allowed to come and visit the holy shrines of Jerusalem: the hill where Christ had been crucified, and the tomb where He had risen from the dead.

Unlike the Germanic tribes, the Arabs did not destroy the cities they had conquered, but added new buildings and made the cities more splendid than they had ever been before. In that part of the world, in the Orient, there was no shortage of gold and silver, no shortage of money, and the Arabs used the gold to

build cities far more magnificent than ancient Rome had ever been.

The most famous of these Arab cities became Baghdad, the city of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid. (There are many stories about him in the *Thousand and One Nights).* The palace of the Caliph in Baghdad was the most luxurious building in the world. This palace was surrounded by large gardens with little streams, fountains, ponds, the green lawns dotted with pavilions where musicians and dancers were always ready to amuse their master. The palace itself had hundreds of rooms, the walls decorated with mosaics and the floors covered with soft Persian carpets. But the most splendid of all these rooms was the Hall of the Tree which contained an enormous tree made of solid gold and the leaves were made of silver. The fruits on that tree were clusters of rubies, emeralds and pearls.

But it was not only the Caliph who lived in such luxury. The Arab merchants of Baghdad were so rich that it was quite common among them to spend vast sums every day on alms for the poor, quite apart from what they spent for their own pleasure.

And not only the rich, but all people of Baghdad enjoyed a wonderful lifestyle. At a time when serfs and villains in Europe never took a bath, and a knight only on special occasions, at the same time the citizens of Baghdad had thousands of public baths, all with hot and cold water and steam-baths.

In Europe the roads were so bad that you walked in clouds of dust in dry weather and knee-deep in mud when it rained. In Baghdad the streets were paved and roofed over with arcades to give protection against sun and rain. Moreover, at night, they had street-lighting — something that came to Europe only a thousand years later.

In Christian Europe only the monks looked after sick people, but the monks knew very little about medicine. But the Arabs in Baghdad built the first public hospital. The Arab doctor, Al-Razi, who was in charge of the building of the hospital wanted to build it in the healthiest part of Baghdad. To find out where that was he hung pieces of raw meat in different parts of

the city and the part where the meat kept fresh longest he chose for building his hospital.

In Europe the wisdom and knowledge of Greece and Rome had been destroyed and lost when the Germanic tribes swept away the Roman Empire. They did not appreciate knowledge and books, but believed in a strong arm and a brave heart. But when the Arabs conquered the Orient they still found much of Greek and Roman wisdom and books containing this knowledge. And the Arabs were eager to absorb this knowledge for themselves. Whatever they could learn — from Greeks and Romans, from pagans, Christians and Jews, from India and China — they absorbed it, collected it and wrote it down.

In Europe neither kings nor knights had any time for books. Books were only found in the monasteries, and a monastery with a hundred books was very proud of its great treasure. But, one of the Caliphs, the Al-Mansour of Cordoba in Spain, had a private library of four hundred thousand books.

The Arabs were eager to learn, and so in Baghdad the great Caliph Harun al-Rashid built a "House of Wisdom" as he called it, a great building where all the knowledge from everywhere in the world was collected in books and where great teachers instructed thousands of students in this knowledge — in medicine, astronomy, physics, chemistry. This House of Wisdom in Baghdad was really the first university, and the very beginning of all modern science.

In Europe people had only the Roman numerals and these are no use for doing complex calculations. It was an Arab, Al-Kwarizmi, — who introduced the numerals which we now use and call "Arabic" numerals from India. One of the most important aspects of the Arabic numerals is being able to write something for nothing, for *zero.* In fact, the word zero comes from an Arabic word. Al-Kwarizmi also wrote the first book on the rules of arithmetic, how to add and multiply and divide.

A Christian monk, Gerbert, heard of this great art of arithmetic which the Arabs had. He learned the Arabic language, and went to an Arab university in Spain. It was through this monk

Gerbert that arithmetic came from the Arabs to Europe. (Gerbert later became Pope Sylvester II.)

The same man who wrote the first book on arithmetic also wrote the first book about algebra, which is an Arabic word and means "putting together again." And if you don't like arithmetic and algebra be grateful to the Arabs for sugar. The use of sugar for making sweets came to us from the Arabs, as did the art of making perfumes for scent.

11. Charles Martell, Poitiers, Charlemagne

Arab civilization was far ahead of Christian Europe. Not only were houses, cities, food and comforts far superior to anything that existed at the time in Europe, but more importantly, they had universities ("schools of wisdom") and had a knowledge of every kind of science far beyond anything among the Christians in Europe. Even to learn basic mathematics, a monk had to go to an Arab university. And it was the same with the science of medicine. All the knowledge our doctors have today to heal and to cure illness and diseases would not be here if men from Christian lands had not gone to the great Arab universities.

Yet, Arab civilization was not really so wise; it only collected all the wisdom and knowledge they could find — the wisdom of ancient Greece, of Egypt, Persia, India, China. It was like a man who could not make up a new story himself, but wrote a book with all the good stories made up by other people; such a man has not created something new, but at least all the stories are now in one book. Arab civilization could be compared with such a man — it did not produce much new wisdom, but put all the old wisdom together and taught it in the universities. It was like the moon which has no light of its own, but reflects the light of the sun.

Now we have seen the Arab power reached like a crescent moon from Constantinople (which was still Christian) to the Pyrenees Mountains in the north of Spain. The whole of Spain was in Arab hands.

In the land to the north of Spain, in ancient times Celtic people lived there and it had been called Gaul. Julius Caesar had conquered Gaul for Rome and the people had become "Romanized" — they lived like Romans. But when the Roman

Empire was conquered by the Germanic tribes, they also invaded Gaul. The tribe which invaded Gaul called themselves "the free people" which in their language was *frank*. These Franks conquered Gaul and so the land became "France," the land of the Franks. In time, the Franks became Christians, and so north of the Pyrenees there was a Christian country, France, and south of the mountains Spain was a Muslim country.

It was the command of Muhammad that Islam was to be spread by fire and sword to all other nations. After a time the Arab rulers in Spain looked for new conquests: there was France on the other side of the Pyrenees — and once France fell, the whole of Europe would be theirs.

And so a vast army of five hundred thousand crossed the Pyrenees into France. Wherever they came, churches and monasteries went up in flames, monks were killed, and prisoners were taken to Spain as slaves.

At that time the King of the Franks was, unfortunately, a weak young man for whom the lords, the great landowners of France, had no respect. A king in those days had no army — he depended entirely on his knights to bring their "vassals," their fighting men when they were needed. They were badly needed now, for already the whole of the south of France was overrun. Yet, the lords and knights would still not fight under a King whom they despised.

But then another man came forward. He owned more land than any other knight in France, he was the most powerful of the lords and had more vassals — more fighting men — than anyone else, and in the battlefield he was a terror to his enemies. He was the highest minister of the king. It was this powerful man, Charles, who called the knights together. When he offered himself as leader against the Arab invasion, the knights with one voice agreed to fight under him.

And so at last an army of Franks marched against the Arabs. The year and the place where the two armies clashed should be remembered, for it was one of the most important battles of history. It was in 732, and took place near the town of Poitiers.

The battle lasted seven days. Arabs and Franks fought all day withdrawing to their camps at night and starting to fight again in

the mornings. For seven days both sides fought savagely and fiercely. On the night of the seventh day the Franks heard a great noise in the Arab camp and when the sun rose the next morning the Arabs had left, leaving their tents and hundreds of thousands of dead behind. This battle of Poitiers had not only saved France but the rest of Europe, too. If the Franks had lost, Arabic might now be the language of Europe.

From that day on the great leader of the Franks was called Charles Martell (which means Charles the Hammer) for the "hammering" he had given the Arabs.

Charles Martell, the leader of the Franks, was now so greatly honoured and respected that he could easily have made himself king, but he did not do so. He felt it his duty to support the unrespected weak king. But for these peoples only a strong man, a fighter, a great warrior could be their ruler. When Charles Martell died, his son called Pipin the Short, for he was short and stocky but full of energy and ambition, did not hesitate to make himself King of the Franks. The former king was forced to become a monk and spend the rest of his life in a monastery.

The grandson of Charles Martell, the son of Pipin, became one of the greatest rulers in history. He was called Charlemagne which means Charles the Great (*magnus* is Latin for great).

There are many stories of Charlemagne, of his deeds and the deeds of his knights — as many as there are about King Arthur and his knights. And whenever there are so many stories then it is a sign that people for hundreds of years remembered a king with admiration.

Now Charlemagne, the grandson of Charles Martel, had one great ambition from his earliest youth. It was like a great dream before his mind. This ambition was to create a new great empire, as the Roman Empire had been. But it was to be a Christian empire, and an empire of the Germanic peoples, not a Roman one.

At that time the different Germanic tribes had each their own kingdoms, small ones, large ones, and none of these was willing to surrender to Charlemagne without a fight. It was again like an ordeal. If Charlemagne wanted to rule an empire — like the Roman Emperors had done — he had to fight for it

and prove by war and battle that he was the right man to bring a new empire to Europe.

And that is what Charlemagne did. In Italy another Germanic tribe, the Lombards, (which means "long beards") had established their kingdom. (Lombardy is still called after them). East of France, across the Rhine, another Germanic tribe who were still pagans and worshipped Odin and Thor, had their kingdom. They were the Saxons *(saxe,* short sword), kinsmen of the Anglo-Saxons in England. Charlemagne first overcame the Lombards and so became master of Italy. Then in a long and terrible war he subdued the wild Saxons in Germany and forced them to become Christians. And so three countries which are separate today were at the time of Charlemagne under his rule and one land: France, Italy, Germany.

12. The New Empire

The Franks, the first to defeat the Arabs, afterwards became the most powerful nation in Europe under Charlemagne, who conquered the Lombard Kingdom in Italy and the pagan Saxon tribe in Germany.

The conquest of Italy was easy. The King of the Lombards (the long-bearded people) was watching from a tower the approach of the Franks. He saw thousands and thousands of Frankish warriors and knights all clad from head to foot in heavy iron armour. And in their midst was one taller than all others, whose shield and armour seemed heavier than any other and whose iron spear was longer than any other, who was riding an enormous iron-grey horse. This was Charlemagne. And when the Lombard King saw this mighty figure that seemed to be made of iron he lost heart and fled without battle. So Charlemagne, that man of iron as the Lombards called him, easily became master of Italy. The Pope in Rome had been badly treated by the Lombards; he was pleased to see Charlemagne as master of Italy, for Charlemagne, with all his power, was always obedient and respectful to the Pope.

The conquest of the pagan Saxons in Germany was not so easy. The land of the Saxons was at that time still covered with dense forests, marshes and swamps. The Saxons did not come and meet Charlemagne and his Franks in open battles, but hid in the forests and swamps and let the Franks pass. Then they suddenly attacked them in the rear when they least expected it. And even when one Saxon tribe had been defeated and had sworn peace and obedience to Charlemagne, they would rise against him as soon as the Franks had left.

But when a Saxon tribe had broken their sworn promise Charlemagne, who had a wild temper, made them pay a terrible price. When they were defeated and surrendered the second

time, five thousand Saxons were beheaded by the Franks as a warning example to the others.

But Charlemagne could at other times also be a generous foe. One Saxon leader called Widukind, who had never been defeated and whose warriors were still holding their own against the Franks, was curious to know what kind of person Charlemagne was, for he had never seen him. Dressed as a villain, this Saxon leader made his way to the town where Charlemagne was staying at that time. It was mid-winter, Christmas time, and there was a church where a Christmas service was held. Curiously, the pagan Saxon looked inside and saw Charlemagne, the great king, kneeling humbly in prayer, together with hundreds of other people. He heard them sing hymns and saw the light of many candles. It moved the wild Saxon deeply. When the service was over, he went boldly up to Charlemagne and said: "I am Widukind, the Saxon leader, your enemy!"

But Charlemagne said: "No, on this day, the day of the birth of Christ, I do not think of any man on earth as my enemy. Come with me as my friend and share the Christmas meal with us."

The Saxon stayed — he became a Christian as later did his men, and they became loyal subjects of Charlemagne.

In time, first the Saxons, then other Germanic tribes surrendered to Charlemagne and his rule stretched from France far to the east of Europe. Now, to the south of France there was Spain, which was still under Arab rule. The King of Spain, Marsilius, was a cruel, mean and treacherous man. He was so evil, that some of his own noblemen rebelled against him and, although they were Muslims, they begged Charlemagne, a Christian King, to come to their help against wicked Marsilius. Charlemagne came to their help and crossed the Pyrenees with a great army. But Marsilius had no wish to fight. He received Charlemagne not with arms but with a splendid welcome, with banquets and gifts, he assured Charlemagne of his friendship and agreed to give Charlemagne a part of northern Spain. But in his heart the cunning king planned a revenge for the humiliation that he had to treat a Christian king as friend and had also lost a part of Spain.

When the Franks eventually marched back across the Pyrenees to France, their rearguard — the last group of soldiers — was under the command of Roland, a nephew of Charlemagne. The greater part of the Frankish army was many miles ahead when the rearguard with Roland passed through a narrow gorge. Suddenly there was the wild Arab battle-cry: thousands of Arabs came from their ambush behind rocks and rushed down in the Franks. Roland and the Franks fought bravely but they were outnumbered, and one after another the Franks died. Roland, bleeding from many wounds, put a horn to his lips — a famous horn called Oliphant — and blew it with his last breath. So loud was the blast that Charlemagne, miles ahead, heard it and cried: "This is Roland's horn! Let us turn back!"

But when they came to the valley they found Roland already dead and beside him the broken horn — it had burst with the hero's last blast.

Now having also gained a part of Spain, Charlemagne ruled an empire almost as large as that of any Roman emperor. One Christmas-time when Charlemagne made a journey to Rome and was kneeling during the Christmas service in the church the Pope lifted up a golden crown — a crown such as the Caesars had worn — and placed it on Charlemagne's head, and called out: "I proclaim thee Caesar Augustus, Emperor — the true successor of the Roman emperors!"

Out in the street the people shouted: "Hail to the new Caesar, hail to the new Roman Empire."

So the great dream of Charlemagne had come true. The year when this happened is easy to remember — it was AD 800.

But although Charlemagne had become a mighty Emperor, he had no better education than any other knight of the Franks; while he could fight and hunt, he could neither read nor write. Yet now, as a great ruler, he realized what a precious thing knowledge is, and though he was well over fifty years old, he tried to learn what he had not learnt in childhood. He kept under his pillow a wax-tablet, a little board with wax on it, and a "stylus," a pointed piece of wood. And every morning he practised writing letters on that tablet. But he was already too old —

his hand could no longer acquire the skill, his mind could no longer learn something new, and he never mastered the art of writing.

Just because the arts of reading and writing were denied to himself, Charlemagne wanted other children to have them. And he made a rule that both his noblemen and the poor, both knights and peasants, should send their children to the monasteries so that they should learn to read and write. And he, the great Emperor himself, took the trouble to visit the monastery-schools to see what progress the children made. On one of these visits (he made many) he came to such a class of children, sitting around a good, old monk. Some children wore fine clothes which showed that their fathers were rich and noble knights. But there were also children in poor rough clothes, even in rags. Now Charlemagne asked the children, one after another, to read to him from the great book the monk held on his knees. And it turned out that the ill-clothed boys and girls could read well and fluently, while the children in fine clothes stammered and stuttered. Charlemagne was furious; his eyes blazed with anger, he shouted: "You lazy crowd! Do you think that your father's wealth or a noble rank is all that matters? I promise you that none of you will come to any high rank or honours in my kingdom." But to the poor children he said: "I am very pleased with you and I shall see to it that you will have the highest positions in the land when you grow up."

This rule of Charlemagne that all children should learn to read and write was — at that time — something quite new — it was the beginning of schools as we have them now. But, unfortunately — after his death, his empire was divided — his wise rules were forgotten and a new and terrible enemy brought bloodshed, war and destruction to Europe, so that this idea of schooling for every child disappeared in the terrible time that came, and it took almost a thousand years before there were schools for all children again.

13. The Vikings

Charlemagne had built up a great empire — the Empire of Germanic peoples, an empire that was the successor to the Roman Empire. But as it was also a Christian empire, it was called the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations. "Holy" meant it had the blessing of the Church, "Roman" meant that it was a renewal of the ancient Roman Empire, and "of German Nations" meant, of course, that it was an empire of Franks, Saxons, Lombards — of Germanic peoples, of peoples who spoke a language which was, one could say, the "grandfather" of modern German.

But after Charlemagne's death, his two sons divided the Holy Roman Empire. One son took the Kingdom of the Franks and, in time, this became France, a land with its own language, the French language. The other part was still called Holy Roman Empire for it included not only Germany but also Italy and Rome. The river Rhine was the border-line between these two lands — west of the Rhine France, east of the Rhine the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations — which was really Germany. From now on two new nations existed: France and Germany.

But Charlemagne's sons were not like their father. If Charlemagne gave a command it would not have occurred to anyone to argue or to disobey — you had the feeling this man is born to rule and to command. His sons were not like this, and the knights and noblemen did as they pleased, which meant that they were forever fighting each other and robbing each other. So it was not surprising that with all that strife and bloodshed in the lands, the schooling of children came to an end, as well as many other good things Charlemagne had introduced. One could say, Charlemagne had tried to plant the tender little flower of civilization, but the little flower withered

and died in the cold blasts that came when the great Emperor of the Franks had died.

But worse than the unruly, troublesome knights, was the coming of a new, savage enemy. This new enemy did not come from the south like the Muslims, but from the north, from Scandinavia. The Germanic tribes of Scandinavia had remained pagan — they still worshipped Odin and Thor. And as once Germanic tribes had come from the forests of Germany to attack the Roman Empire, so the Germanic tribes from further north, from Scandinavia, came to rob, plunder, attack and destroy. This time the Scandinavian warriors did not come by land, but they came by sea. These men from the north, the Northmen, or Norsemen as they were called (or Vikings as they called themselves) were the most daring, the most skilful sailors the world had known, but they were also cruel and bloodthirsty robbers, and pirates; one ancient writer called them the "Wolves of the Sea."

The ships in which these Norsemen sailed forth were not big — they could not hold more than thirty men. There was a good reason for using small vessels. A big ship can only be navigated on the high seas — but a smaller ship can sail on a river and so get far inland. So a raiding party of Norsemen came in two or three hundred small boats and not in twenty big ones.

The prow and stern of a Viking ship stood high above the water, and the prow was carved to look like the head of a dragon. The "waist" of the dragon-ship was low, so that the oars could easily reach the water — and all men aboard had to be strong and skilled oarsmen to row her when there was no wind for her sails. She carried square sails in bright colours, red or blue. On the bulwarks (the ships sides above the deck) the men hung their shining shields in a row.

The Norsemen regarded a peaceful death as shameful; they were proud and boasted of the gashes and wounds they had received in battle; a man with the most painful wounds would laugh and joke to show how little he was bothered by the pain. But to hurt other people, to inflict wounds, was also a joke for these Norsemen, and so they were merciless and cruel to enemies and victims who fell into their hands.

And they came in their dragon-ships from the north: they sailed along the coasts of Scotland, England, France, Spain, and even into the Mediterranean. They came upon villages and towns and cities on the coast; they robbed and plundered and killed; they burnt down houses and churches, and, being pagans, they massacred every monk and priest they found.

Not only did they attack places on the coast, they sailed up-river on the Thames in England, on the Seine in France, and carried death and destruction deep inland. Sometimes they carried their ships on their backs from one river to another so that no place anywhere near water was safe from them. And they came regularly. Every year from spring, when the ice on the rivers melted, to autumn, fleets of dragon-ships appeared here and there spreading terror and leaving behind them a trail of death and destruction.

In those days of the Norsemen, people in Britain, Ireland, France lived in a state of continuous terror; there was no protection, no one could foresee when they would come or where they would turn up. Every day in their churches the poor, terrified people prayed one prayer: "From the fury of the Norsemen deliver us, O Lord!"

In those days, in the whole of Europe, life became harder, people became poorer and more ignorant, than they had ever been before. The Dark Ages became very dark indeed.

Being utterly fearless sailors, they sailed their dragon-ships where no man had dared sail before. One of these dragon-ships sailing far north of Scotland was caught in a storm, for days it was driven through heaving waves; at long last the Norsemen saw land. They made for it and went ashore. They found that there was not a single human on that island, but it was large and there was good grass for herds. When the sea was calm again, these Norsemen sailed away, they sailed south and after many adventures came back to Norway and told their tale of the beautiful empty island.

Another Viking, Floki, heard the tale. He had killed the son of a king and to avoid the king's revenge, Floki decided to leave Norway with his family and with his men and to settle on that island. And so they sailed. Some ships carried fighting men,

others carried their women and children, other ships carried household goods, and there were also ships with cattle and sheep, with sacks of corn, so that they could make a new start when they came to the island.

But how could they find this island? There were no maps in those days, they had no compass; all they knew was that the other Vikings had been caught by the storm a day's sailing north of the Faroe Islands. So they made for the Faroe Islands and sailed for a day north. But what now? They had thought of what they should do. Floki, the leader of the fleet had brought with him three ravens. Now the raven is not a sea-bird, it is a bird that likes to be well inland. And if a raven is taken far out to sea and then set free it knows by the wonderful wisdom that God has given to wild animals, where the nearest land is, and will fly to it by the shortest way — it will make for it in a straight line ("as the crow flies" we say still today). And so Floki with his little fleet, surrounded by the trackless sea, and nothing to guide them released the three ravens. Two birds came back, but the third one flew off and the Norsemen saw it getting smaller and smaller until it disappeared. But they had well marked the direction. And before nightfall they came to the island they had been seeking. The raven, the sacred bird of Odin, had shown them the way.

They named this island Iceland; it is still called so today. Soon other Vikings followed Floki and also settled in Iceland. And the Iceland Vikings were the wildest, the most lawless of the Norsemen. But there was one of them, Eric the Red, who was so wild, rough and troublesome that even this reckless lot would not put up with him. They banished him for three years. Undaunted Eric the Red sailed away, but he did not sail back to Norway, he sailed west where no man had sailed before. The people of Iceland thought they had seen the last of him. But after three years he came back with his boat and his men and they boasted of a beautiful land of green meadows they had found. They called it Greenland, and soon twenty-five ships with men, families, cattle, sailed with Eric the Red, to this new land, Greenland and settled there.

A few years later, the son of Eric the Red, Leif, wondered

what lands might lie still farther west. And he sailed out with a few men in a dragon-boat in the direction of the setting sun. After days they came to a rocky shore where they found a river and sailed upstream. There were plenty of deer and wild boar on the banks of the river, and they found sweet berries from which they made a pleasant-tasting wine. And Leif Ericson called this land Vinland. They brought the news of their discovery back to Greenland and for many years Vikings sailed forwards and back between Greenland and Vinland. But at one time a group of Vikings was attacked and killed by the natives of Vinland. After this the Vikings stopped sailing there. It was much easier to rob and plunder in Europe. Later on they also left Greenland because the climate changed and it became too cold. Only Iceland remained Viking. But the Icelandic Vikings wrote the stories of Eric's and Leif's journeys in books. Time passed, the books gathered dust on shelves, no one read them, and Vinland was forgotten. Only in modern times did scholars study these old books again, and found that Vinland was nothing else but America. Without compass, these Vikings had been the first to discover America.

14. King Alfred and the Danes

The prayer: "From the fury of the Norsemen deliver us, O Lord" was heard in every part of Europe. The Norsemen even conquered Sicily, the great Mediterranean island south of Italy. But there was one country which suffered more from them than any other, and that was the land of the Anglo-Saxons, England. The English coast is only a short sea-journey from Denmark, and it was mostly Danish Vikings who came to plunder and to kill. And worse, after a time some Danes settled in parts of England themselves, and now they could make raids, attack and destroy on land as well as by sea.

Now in these terrible times there was a ruler of England who fully deserves to be called "the Great" in the history books. He did not make great conquests like Charlemagne, but he did much good for his people, the Anglo-Saxons, or Saxons as they now were called. Some of the good things he introduced have lasted right into our time. This great and good man was Alfred the Great.

There is a story about Alfred's childhood. He was the youngest of five brothers. Once, when Alfred was only six years old, his mother, the Queen, showed her children a beautiful book. The initial letters were in blue, red and gold and with beautiful illustrations on the parchment pages. The five boys crowded around her, admiring the book; the older boys could recognize a letter here and there, but none of them could read properly. The Queen would have liked her children to be able to read and she said to the boys: "As you all like this book so much, I will give it to one of you — to the boy who will be the first who can read it."

Alfred, the little one said: "Can I try too?"

"Of course you too can have a try," said the Queen.

Alfred went straightaway to the old monk who taught the

princes, and he spent many hours every day learning to read. His brothers were not lazy, they were all keen to get this beautiful book and they worked hard. But they did not work as hard as Alfred. And, to their surprise, it was Alfred who came one day, asked his mother to open the wonderful book and read it to all of them, without a single mistake He had won the prize.

Alfred remained fond of books and reading all his life, but he was not given much time to enjoy peaceful reading. The Danes came again and again from their strongholds and the Anglo-Saxons had to fight for their lives. First Alfred's father, Ethelwulf, was killed in a battle against the Danes, and then, one after another, his elder brothers lost their lives fighting the invaders. And so Alfred became King in AD 871.

He soon showed that he was as good in warfare as he was with books. In several battles he defeated the Danes and they took to their ships and sailed away. But now Alfred showed that he was not only a warrior but a man who could use his head.

He thought it would be better not to wait for the Danish ships until they landed and their warriors came ashore — no, they should be fought on the sea. And he made his Anglo-Saxons build ships and when the next fleet of Danish ships could be seen approaching, the Anglo-Saxon ships sailed out to meet them and in the following sea-battle the Danes lost half their ships and men and suffered a terrible defeat. The Danes were so disheartened that they made peace with Alfred and their king even swore an oath by Odin and Thor, that the Danes would never come and trouble England again.

Alfred — who would never break his word — trusted the oath of the Danes. But they were treacherous; when the Saxons were quite unprepared, the Danes came suddenly again, but this time with many fleets which attacked England in many places at the same time. Alfred had no time to gather an army, his few soldiers were defeated and the Danes overran the whole country.

King Alfred had to flee and hide from the Danes who wanted to catch him and to kill him. He had to disguise himself; dressed as a peasant he wandered from village to village, always in danger of being found by the Danes who hunted everywhere for him. The peasants who gave him shelter for a few days before he

passed on to the next village never betrayed him to the Danes, they loved their King and hoped one day he would rule them again and drive out the Danes.

At one time King Alfred was given shelter by a poor cowherd, a man who looked after other people's cows as they grazed on the green slopes of the English Downs. The cowherd knew that the man dressed in the rough clothes of a villain was King Alfred, but he did not tell his wife who the visitor was. Perhaps he thought she was inclined to chatter and gossip and might by a careless word, give the secret away. His wife (who worked in the fields as well as looking after the household and the cooking) was not too pleased to have a visitor in the house who did no work. One day, when she had to go out to work in the fields she thought that this idle fellow could at least do something to earn his keep. She said, "Look, my good man, I have put some cakes in the oven. I have to go out now, but you watch these cakes and when they are done, take them out."

Alfred promised he would keep an eye on the cakes and the cowherd's wife left. He sat by the oven, watching the cakes. But his thoughts soon strayed away from cakes and cooking, he thought of days to come, of a time when he would again lead Saxon warriors against the Danes; and in his mind, he saw the Danes driven back, he saw Saxon warriors storming the Danish ships, he saw the Danish ships set on fire and burning and on flames. He could even smell the smoke of the burning ships — yes, there was the smell of something burnt, the whole hut was full of it. But it was not the Danish ships, it was the smell of the cakes burned black in the oven. And just at this moment the cowherd's wife came in by the door. She saw and smelled what had happened.

"You fool," she shouted in her rage, "you have just enough brains to eat my cakes but you are too stupid and too idle to watch them getting done. In all my life I have not met such a useless, good-for-nothing as you are!"

She was still shouting when her husband came in.

"Hush woman," he said, "do you know who our visitor is? He is our King!"

"Good Heavens," cried the woman, "King Alfred! Forgive

me, my lord — I would never have spoken so rudely, had I known who you were."

But Alfred laughed and said, "You were quite right, I should have kept my mind on the cakes. But your cakes have not been burnt in vain; while I was day-dreaming and forgot about the cakes, I have formed in my mind a plan to drive out the Danes. And when England is free again, I will remember the people who have sheltered me in my time of need, people like you two, and you will be well rewarded."

This is the famous story of King Alfred and the Cakes. And the plans Alfred had made while the cakes got burnt, his day-dreams, came true. In secrecy Alfred called the noblemen of the Saxons to a meeting when he told them his plans; in secrecy a fortress was built deep in the forests where weapons were stored and men prepared themselves to fight. And in secrecy, messengers went round, from village to village, telling the Saxon peasants to be ready to rise against the Danes when King Alfred would call for them to strike.

But no general would venture a battle without first finding out where the enemy forces are weakest and where they are strongest. King Alfred too wanted to know the places where it would be best to strike at the Danes. Now King Alfred was also a master in playing the harp and he could sing very well. He disguised himself as a minstrel, a musician and singer who went from place to place, entertaining people.

The Danes had camps here and there, all over England. And Alfred, as a minstrel, went from camp to camp, playing his harp and singing. And the Danes enjoyed his music and gave him a few coins for his songs. But all that time Alfred kept his eyes open and noted which camps had many warriors and which had only few.

When Alfred had found out all he wanted to know, his messengers hurried by night from village to village, from castle to castle. The Saxons brought out their hidden weapons and attacked the Danes. The Danes were taken by surprise, their strongholds and camps were stormed by the Saxons and, if Alfred had not been merciful, not one Dane would have been left alive. But Alfred did not allow his men to kill Danish

prisoners who had surrendered. There were thousands of Danish prisoners, among them their King. They expected death and even torture from the Saxons — and they were full of wonder when King Alfred told them that they should take their ships and go back to Denmark.

The King of the Danes could never forget the generous, noble treatment Alfred had given to his defeated armies. Later, this King of the Danes came as visitor to Alfred, and he asked to be baptized and become a Christian. And he and Alfred became such friends that Alfred gave him a part of England (East Anglia) where he and his men settled as vassals of Alfred.

When other Danish pirates came and tried to plunder the English coast, Alfred's ships were ready for them and drove the Vikings off. And so under King Alfred, England enjoyed more peace than the people had known for a long time.

15. Alfred the Great

King Alfred introduced many things which are still important to us today. He was a King with a great love for fairness and justice. At his time the ancient way in which justice was done among the Saxons — the "ordeals" of battle, the ordeals of fire — no longer worked as they had in the past. A new way to give fair judgment had to be found, and so King Alfred had laws written down in books.

But Alfred did not think that — as in Roman times — only one man, the judge, should decide if an accused person was guilty or not. He thought twelve people should make this decision, twelve men who were known and respected for their honesty. These twelve "good men and true" should listen carefully to everything that was said for and against an accused person. Then they should discuss among themselves what they thought, and finally all twelve had to agree on whether the accused was guilty or innocent. This kind of justice is called "trial by jury" (the twelve are the jury).

And this trial by jury is still the law of this country and it proved such a fair and just way of judgment that it is used in many other countries too. So King Alfred's love for fairness and justice has been a blessing right into the present time.

But in those days of King Alfred there were no police: so how could the King make sure that the wise laws he had given were kept? King Alfred thought the Saxons themselves should see to it that law and order were kept. And so he divided England into counties, and the people in each county were responsible for catching evil-doers and bringing them to justice. Before King Alfred it was up to the man who had been robbed to find the robber; now all the people of a village, all the people of a larger area, a county, were to help and to work together to bring the robber to justice.

And the Saxons loved their great and good king so much that this idea worked very well. At the time of King Alfred England became so safe, the people were so honest that a traveller could lose his purse on the high road and he could be certain he would find it — days or weeks later — exactly where he had lost it, for no one would have touched it. King Alfred had golden arm-bands hung up on poles on cross-roads and left unguarded — he did it to test the honesty of his Saxons — and not one arm-band was ever stolen. Even the poorest Saxon serf would not have wanted to disappoint his King.

Now that his country was at last at peace, he could go on with his studies (remember he learned to read quicker than his brothers). He even learned Latin when he was thirty-five years old. And then he translated many books into English so that even those who knew no Latin should be able to read them.

But he wanted this knowledge not only for himself, but for all the Saxon people. As the Danes had destroyed most of the monasteries — the only kind of school there was — Alfred had many of them rebuilt. And, like Charlemagne, he insisted that children of noblemen should learn to read and write.

His studies and his work kept King Alfred very busy. To make the best use of his time he divided his day in three parts: eight hours for work (that meant seeing the people who came to him with requests or complaints), eight hours for study (reading his beloved books) and eight hours for rest. But there was one difficulty about this division of the day — in those days there were no watches or clocks. Even the hourglass filled with sand, had not yet been invented. There were sundials on which the length and direction of the shadow of a stick showed the time of day. But on dull or rainy days (which in Britain are most days of the year) the sundials showed no shadow and no time. So Alfred became an inventor, making his own kind of clock. He had wax-candles made of a special length and thickness which took exactly four hours to burn to the end. He must have spent quite a time on sunny days, burning candles beside a sundial until he found the right length and thickness of a candle that was to last four hours. These candles were put in a lantern to protect them against wind and draught. There was still no glass so Alfred used

parchment (sheepskin scraped so thin that it was transparent). And there was a servant who had only one duty: to light a new candle immediately the old one was finished. He also had to tell King Alfred whenever one hour had passed.

So Alfred the Great was an inventor, a learned man for his time, a law-giver and a great general who had defeated the Danes. But he was also a merciful man, and, above all, he was so truthful and honest that his people, the Saxons, called him "Alfred the Truth-teller." In the wild, rough times in which he lived, King Alfred was like a beacon of light in a dark night, a King loved by all the people he ruled and even respected by his enemies.

When Alfred died, England lost a king as there are few in history, a man who was as brave as he was clever and as clever as he was kind and just. His successors were not worthy of him, they were weak and even cruel. The laws of Alfred were forgotten and, what was worse, the Danes came back. And after the Danes other invaders came, and in the end, the Saxons came under the rule of these new invaders.

16. The Norman Conquest

ter the death of Alfred, Danish invaders came again in the agon ships. They occupied part of England, and the Saxons in e other parts had to pay for their freedom. They had to pay to e Danes large sums of money every year — this was called anegelt — and then they were left in peace. If the Saxons did ot pay, the Danes came robbing and plundering. In the end the xons came to the King of the Danes and asked him to become eir king, King of the Saxons as well. At least, in this way, they ould not have to pay Danegelt as they would be subjects of the me king. By this time the Danes had become Christians like e Saxons, and as Saxons and Danes now lived in peace gether, it happened more and more after that that there were arriages between the two people and they became one nation, en their language became one. So in England the Viking vaders and the Saxons, after a long time of struggle, came to be ie nation.

It was about the time when Vikings of Denmark settled in ngland, that other Vikings, probably from Norway, made their omes on the east coast of Scotland. It was a Viking called dwin who built himself a stronghold on a hill overlooking the rth of Forth, and the name "Edinburgh" still reminds us of ese Norsemen. The Lowland Scots of the east coast are scendants of these Vikings or Norsemen.

In England and in Scotland, the Norsemen first came only to under and sailed away again. Then they came and took land, ey settled and became Christians. And what happened in ritain also happened in France. At first the Norsemen came ly to rob and to destroy, then they took one part of France for emselves and settled. This part was called the land of the orsemen, Normans, and it is still called Normandy today.

The Normans, as they were now called, also became

Christians, and they wanted to be knights just like the French knights. For this reason, the leader of the Normans agreed to swear fealty to the King of France. Now taking the oath of fealty was a long ceremony, and the Norman, Rollo, should kiss the foot of the King of France as part of this ceremony. But Rollo was too proud to kiss anybody's foot, King or not. When the King put his foot forward to be kissed, Rollo took one of his soldiers and forced him to kiss the King's foot for him. Still, in this way he became a knight of the King of France with the title "Duke of Normandy." But neither Rollo nor, after him, his sons and grandsons, bothered much about the King of France: they made war against other great lords, or they made peace, as they pleased. But the Normans could not help admiring the French for being more civilized than they were and they took up the ways of life of French knights, they even gave up their own language (which was like Norwegian), and spoke French.

Now Normandy is just on the other side of the Channel from England, and so quite often Saxon knights visited Norman knights and Norman knights came to visit England. And there came a time when the King of England liked the Normans better than his own people, the Saxons. This King of England, Edward, had spent his youth as a page and squire in Normandy among Norman knights. When he came back to England, even when he became King, he was more a Norman than a Saxon. King Edward had no son and as he grew old he decided that the crown of England should go to a Norman, not to a Saxon lord. And so he made a promise to William, Duke of Normandy, that he should become King of England after Edward's death.

So when Edward died, William of Normandy sent a message to England that he claimed the throne — it had been promised to him by Edward. But the Saxon lords and noblemen did not want a Norman king and they chose one of themselves, a Saxon lord, Harold, as King of England. This did not please William: he gathered a great army of knights and fighting men to take England by force. And, on the other side of the Channel, Harold gathered an army of Saxons ready to fight the Normans when they came.

But while the Saxon army was waiting on the south coast for

the Normans to come, a fleet of Viking dragon-ships attacked the east coast of England. Harold and his army had to go and fight the Vikings and drive them off. And so the south coast of England was not guarded by a strong army. Just then, the Normans came in their ships across the Channel and could land easily.

William of Normandy was the first to step ashore, but as he did so he stumbled and fell. There was a great outcry from his soldiers for they thought this was a sign of ill-luck. But William shouted, "Did you see, my friends — the earth of England has received me as lord and master." This put good heart into his men and soon the whole Norman army had landed.

Harold and his Saxons heard the news that the Normans had come just after having driven the Vikings off and although they had been marching and fighting without rest they marched as fast as they could south to meet the Norman foes. And so the two armies came to face each other on a grey October morning in the year 1066 near Hastings.

The Saxons had taken positions on the top of a hill and waited for the Normans to attack. And the Normans came, rank behind rank of horsemen, foot-soldiers and archers. But in front of the Normans rode a solitary horseman. He was William's favourite minstrel, his musician. All great lords had knights who could play the lyre and sing to it, and these minstrels were great favourites with their masters. But William's minstrel, Taillefer, was also an expert juggler. And as he rode in front of the Norman army he threw six swords in the air, one after another, and the swords were like a circle of steel flashing in the air around his skilful hands. Nearer and nearer he came, and behind him the Norman ranks. And then one of the swords flew high into the air but it did not come back into his hand, it came down on a Saxon warrior and struck him down. And at this moment the Normans reached the Saxons and the battle began. King Harold was surrounded by his body-guard on top of the hill. But William of Normandy gave his archers the order to shoot their arrows high in the air, and the arrows came down like a rain of death. One arrow struck King Harold in the eye and he died. When their king had fallen the Saxons lost heart,

they fled in all directions. William had won the battle and the crown of England.

The Saxon lords and noblemen who had been against him, now hurried to swear fealty to William, and he entered London in triumph. Through his victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror — as he is known in history — became King of England.

17. The Crusades

Think how many times there have been invasions of Britain: the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes, the Normans. And each one of these invaders left their mark on the English language. From Roman times comes, for instance, the word "master" (*magister* is Latin meaning superior person). From the Anglo-Saxons come nearly all words about farming: wheat, rye, oats, horse, cow, house. From the Danes come most of the words beginning with "sk": sky, skin, skull, skill. From the Normans come French words like mutton (from *mouton,* sheep), pork (from *porc,* pig), court. Our language is really a mixture of many languages, and this is also the reason for the difficult spelling, for it is also a mixture of different spellings. In Anglo-Saxon words "ou" is pronounced as in house, but in Norman words the pronunciation is as in court.

But there are also words in our language which come from a people who never invaded Britain, the Arabs. We have Arabic words in our language, for instance, alcohol, sugar, sofa. How did these Arabic words get into our language? These words came into our language through the Crusades, and we shall now look at how the Crusades began.

The Christian religion meant much to people: the villains willingly gave one tenth (the tithe) of their crop to the monks, the knights and kings made great gifts of land to monasteries and churches, and people spared no money or effort to build their churches as beautifully as could be done. But this was not all. In every Christian land there were people who felt the most wonderful thing in life would be to see with their own eyes the land where Jesus Christ had walked on earth, the Holy Land, and Jerusalem, the Holy City. People who had this great longing to see the Holy Land had to make a very long and arduous journey in those days — it took years before he saw his homeland

again. Such a person was called a pilgrim, and the journey was called pilgrimage. Such a pilgrim often wore special clothes which told everyone that this was a pilgrim who must be helped with food, shelter or money, for it was a Christian's duty to help a pilgrim. The pilgrims wore a hat with little shells on it, they had a little satchel called scrip on a belt, they wore a long garment down to their ankles, and they carried a long staff with a cross on top. In those days, when people felt that their religion was the most important thing in life, there were always hundreds of people coming or going on that great journey.

The Arabs who had taken the Holy Land and Jerusalem tolerated these Christian pilgrims. They let them come to Jerusalem, say their prayers at the holy places and return again to their homelands. But around the time of the Battle of Hastings, at the time when William the Conqueror and his Normans invaded England, something happened in the far away lands of the East. The power of the Arabs was broken, and the might of the Caliphs was shattered.

From the East, from deep in Asia, came a cruel and savage people, the Seljuk Turks. The Turks had long ago embraced the religion of Muhammad. They did not attack the Arab kingdom for reasons of religion, they attacked for conquest. And having lived for so long in great comfort and luxury the Arabs had lost their fighting skills. Their great empire fell to the Turks who were much more fanatical than the Arabs. When Jerusalem fell into their hands in 1071, they killed all Christians in the Holy City and burnt down the Christian churches. They stabled their horses on the holy places and no longer allowed pilgrims to come.

When this news reached the Christians in Europe, it came as a terrible shock to all people. It filled their hearts with the deepest despair that the most holy place on earth, the tomb where Christ had risen from death, was in the hands of unbelievers and that no Christian would ever be allowed to see the holy places again.

In those days people looked up to the Pope, and Pope Urban called a great council — a great meeting of lords, noblemen, knights from every country — in the city of

France, the land of the bravest knights. And they came: lords who commanded thousands of men, knights who had only a handful of vassals, kings and bishops, monks and peasants, it was a mighty gathering. And Pope Urban held a sermon and called on them to take up arms and drive the Turks from the Holy Land. He said: "Christian warriors now there is a great and noble cause to fight for — a fight that will surely have the blessing of God. Feel it in your hearts that it is the will of God that you save the Holy Land from the Turks."

And like a roar of thunder there came from all these thousands of men the cry — like one voice: *"Dieu le volt* (God wills it)."* And as a sign that they devoted their lives and all their possessions to the task of fighting for the Holy Land, they sewed red strips of cloth in the form of a cross on their breast and shoulders. It was the sign of the War of the Cross, or Crusade as they called it.

From the Council of Clermont the knights hastened home and prepared themselves for the long journey. Many of them sold their land and their castles in order to have money for the expedition. But not only knights, also villains and serfs left their ploughs to become "Crusaders" and no master would have dared to hold them back. Merchants left their shops, shepherds their flocks, men with wife and children left their families to the care of God, and set out. Monks went to every village to tell people about the Crusade, so that there was not a place in Europe that was not in wild excitement.

With everything done in such haste it was not surprising that the first army of Crusaders who set out for the Holy Land came to a sad end. This first army of Crusaders consisted mainly of peasants who had no money to pay for their food. At first they marched through countries where the people gave them food as they passed through, but then these first Crusaders came to Byzantium (now Greece and the Balkans) and the Byzantines (who did not recognize the authority of the Pope) would not give them any food without being paid for it. The Crusaders then took what they needed by force. The Byzantine Emperor

* In modern French *Dieu le veut.*

provided ships to move the ragged army across the Bosphorus to Asia Minor. There they were attacked by Turks who massacred most of the Crusaders, only a few being captured as slaves.

After the first army of Crusaders came to such a sad end, a much better prepared and well-organized army was gathered in France under the command of one of the bravest knights in Christendom, Godfrey de Bouillon.

Godfrey de Bouillon was the leader of the Second Crusade, the most famous of all the Crusades.

18. Godfrey de Bouillon

fore we go on with the second Crusade led by the noble odfrey de Bouillon, we must try to understand a little more out this extraordinary thing: that hundreds of thousands of ople in France and Britain, in Germany and Italy, were willing leave their homes, their families, their possessions, to set out a terrible, long journey, a journey that would lead them to ttle with a ferocious enemy, to great hardships and, perhaps, ath.

How was it that hundreds of thousands of men from every lk of life — knights and villains, merchants and tradesmen — llingly and joyfully, pinned the red Crusader's cross on their easts and set out on a journey from which, as they knew, many ould not return?

First there was, of course, a feeling of burning anger in eryone that the most holy place for any Christian — the tomb ere Christ had risen from death — should be in the hands of e people who desecrated it by stabling horses there, and who ould not allow any Christian to come to Jerusalem. It was ameful to let such a thing happen, and it was a holy duty to est the holy places from the grip of the Muslims. For most rusaders this was the main reason and they felt: I am doing mething for God, I am doing the will of God, if I join the rusade.

But for some Crusaders there were also other reasons. Let us ke Fred, a villain. Fred certainly wanted to do the will of God, : wanted to do his share in t.king the Holy Land from the nbelievers. But he also thought that by joining the Crusaders : could get away from the endless hard work for his master and rd. Perhaps he would even gain a knighthood for himself by ave deeds in battle. And who knew what riches, what treasures ould be taken from the enemy? In the Christian lands there

was so little gold, but in the Orient there was so much of it. A Crusader could hope to bring some of that gold back to the Christian lands of Europe. So for Fred, the villain, there was not only the holy duty to fight the Turks, there is also the hope of freedom — that he would come back a knight, a free man, as well as the hope of gold. And there were hundreds of thousands of villains and serfs like Fred. Perhaps if there had been more gold in the Christian lands of Europe; if, in Roman times not so much gold had gone to the Orient, there would not have been quite so many men willing to join the Crusades.

But a knight like Godfrey de Bouillon had no wish to enrich himself by going on a crusade. Yet, for Godfrey, too, there was not only the holy duty to take the Holy Land from the Turks, there was also another reason. We could have heard this reason if we had been present at a meeting Godfrey had with his closest friends. At this meeting Godfrey said: "We are all friends here and so I can speak freely without fear that what I say will be betrayed to monks of priests, and what I want to say is this: I am sure you all feel as I do that our Christian Church which we love wholeheartedly is not what it should be, for it is under the absolute authority of the Pope in Rome. No one is allowed to think for himself, no one is allowed to ask questions about religion or the Church; if anyone does so, he is called a bad Christian and threatened with punishment. Kings and lords have to obey the wishes of the Pope in worldly matters as well as in religion. Surely, this is not what Christ wanted. But in the Orient, in Greece, in Constantinople there are Christians who do not recognize the Pope. Perhaps we can learn from them. Perhaps, when we have taken Jerusalem from the unbelievers we shall be able to make Jerusalem, the Holy City, the centre of a new Christian Church, a Church independent of Rome, independent of the Pope. My friends, let us hope that, in time, the new free Church of Jerusalem will take the place of the unfree Church of Rome where everyone is under authority of the Pope."

This is what Godfrey said to his closest friends and they thought as he did. There were not many knights who thought like Godfrey — but there were some. And for them this hope of

a new Church was another reason to join a Crusade. As we will see later on, this hope was not fulfilled, but it was in the hearts of some knights when they set out.

So both among villains and knights there were all kinds of other reasons to join the Crusades as well as the religious fervour to save the Holy Land from the unbelievers.

Now Godfrey de Bouillon was in command of the second Crusade, a great army of a hundred thousand men, mainly French and German. The knights of this army had sold their land and castles to have money to pay for their food on the journey. They rode and marched through France, Germany, Hungary, through the Balkan peninsula and Greece, then they passed through Constantinople; unfortunately the Crusaders did not stay friendly with the Christian people of Constantinople, because seeing the gold and wealth there tempted many soldiers to rob and plunder.

When the Crusaders came to Syria, the country north of the Holy Land, they had their first battles, but they also encountered other enemies, more terrible than the Turks. The worst of these enemies was the hot climate. The heavy iron-armour which the Crusaders wore became a ghastly burden in the scorching sun of Syria. Nor did the Crusaders know that in a hot climate dirt is full of germs and you have to keep clean to keep healthy; they were not used to washing themselves properly, and soon infectious diseases, epidemics broke out which — as there were no doctors among them — killed thousands of the Crusaders.

For three years the Crusaders battled through Syria, and lost more men through epidemics than through fighting. When, at long last, they had fought their way to Palestine and came before Jerusalem, there were only twenty thousand Crusaders left — one hundred thousand had set out. But for these twenty thousand it was a great day, a wonderful day, when they saw the Holy City, Jerusalem, before them for the first time. Knights and common soldiers cried with joy, some sank to their knees to thank God for being allowed to see the Holy City, some kissed the ground.

But Godfrey de Bouillon was not very happy, he was deeply

worried. He had only twenty thousand men and Jerusalem was not only surrounded by high, thick walls, but also defended by sixty thousand Turks, three times as many men as he had. However, undaunted, the Crusaders prepared themselves to assault the city.

After five days preparation the first assault was made. The Crusaders carried long rope-ladders with grappling-hooks. They threw the ladders high up, the hooks gripped the top of the wall and the Crusaders begin to climb up. But the Turks knew how to deal with them: they cut the rope of the ladders with their swords and the Crusaders toppled down and crashed to the ground. After a day in which they lost many brave men, the Crusaders returned to their camp, sadder but also wiser. They realized now that they had to build siege-towers to take the city. They set to work, knights working side by side with villains and serfs, cutting down trees in a nearby forest, and from the wood they built towers on wheels, towers as high as the walls.

And so, at long last, came the day of the great assault. But before the assault was made something else took place. The whole Crusaders army formed a great procession and — well out of reach of Turkish arrows — they walked round the walls of Jerusalem singing hymns and saying prayers. The Turks shouted insults and curses from the walls at the strange procession, but the Crusaders carried on, undisturbed.

And when they had completed the great round, trumpets pealed and the assault began. The creaking towers with knights on the top were pushed to the walls. The Turks sent hails of arrows against the approaching towers, they also shot flaming arrows, arrows on fire, and here and there these flaming arrows set a siege-tower on fire, but other towers reach the walls. Shouting and cursing the Turks poured buckets of boiling oil onto the Crusaders, but they still came on. Then the bridge of one tower touched the top of the wall, a knight rushed across — the first to set foot on the wall — it was Godfrey de Bouillon. A great shout: *"Dieu le volt,* God wills it," rose from the Crusaders when they saw Godfrey defending his foothold against the Turks. Then another knight joined him, and another. Now

usaders from other towers gained the walls. And after fierce hting the Turks were driven from the walls. But now the bat- continued in the streets of Jerusalem and the Crusaders ught for every house.

It is sad to say that in this furious battle inside the city omen and children too were killed by the Crusaders. But at ng last the fighting was over and Jerusalem was in the hands of e Crusaders. Godfrey, the commander, takes off his armour d his weapons, and dressed only in the coarse long shirt of a lgrim he walked barefoot to the tomb where Christ rose from e dead and remains there in silent prayer.*

The year when Jerusalem was taken by the Crusaders was 099 — thirty-three years after the Battle of Hastings. Many of ose who had set out, had died. Sometimes in old churches you id the tomb of a Crusader knight. On such tombs there is a rving of the knight with his arms crossed over his breast. If ere is a lion under his feet it means that he died on a Crusade.

Now the Holy Land had become a new Christian country, id the Crusader knights offered Godfrey the crown of this new ountry, called the Kingdom of Jerusalem. But Godfrey was too odest and he refused. And so his brother, Baldwin, became the rst King of Jerusalem. This Kingdom lasted for eighty-eight ars and in that time Christian pilgrims could safely come and sit the holy places.

*To this day one can see the hundreds of crosses the Crusader knights carved in ne wall of the church at the tomb.

19. Saladin and Richard Lionheart

The Crusader's Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, was also called the Frankish Kingdom, as most of the knights came from France. Many of the knights had sold their land and their castles to have money for their long journey, and when the Crusade was finished they had no home to go back to. So many knights stayed in the land they had taken from the Turks, and built castles for themselves. One can still see some of these Crusader castles there today.

Now as they lived in the Orient they saw how the Turks and Arabs lived, and saw that there were a good many things to learn from them. There was the use of sugar, for instance, to make things sweet; in Europe people had only known honey. They found the sugar made from sugar-cane much more useful for cooking. That was how the Arabic word *sukkar* and the use of sugar came to us. They also saw that the Turks and Arabs used many spices with their food — pepper, but also ginger and many others, mustard, cinnamon. In a hot country one needs spices to simulate one's appetite. But it was not only the knights in the Holy Land who came to like spices in their food. I have told you how people in Europe had to eat meat that was kept in salt all through the winter and how horrible it tasted. But when people heard of the spices they put a lot of spices into the meat and the salt taste and nasty smell disappeared, and they could enjoy their meat much better. Soon no one in Europe wanted to eat anything that was not heavily spiced. And so a great trade in spices from the Orient began.

Some of the things which the knights learned from the Turks were useful and good. But after a time they also began to imitate other things. The Frankish knights in the Holy Land saw how

easy life could be with slaves to serve you, and so they began to keep slaves. And then there were Frankish knights who followed the Muslim custom of having a harem of many wives — they bought slave-girls and kept them in a harem. Such a knight usually had a real wife and kept a harem besides.

So Jerusalem did not become the centre of a new and better Church than Rome's, as Godfrey de Bouillon and his friends had hoped. The Christian knights with their slaves and harems in the Holy Land could hardly be examples of Christian life.

The first Crusader knights had known great hardships; they had been great and fearless warriors. Their sons and grandsons — born in the Orient, surrounded by slaves, living in luxury and comfort — were no longer warriors. And the Turks would soon have re-conquered Palestine if there had not been other crusades — armies of fighting men who came again and again to the rescue and saved the Holy Land.

But in the long run, these luxury-loving Frankish knights could not keep the Holy Land. For about 88 years, less than three generations, they held the land, but then there arose a Muslim leader who was not only a great general and warrior, but a man of noble character, a man who could well be compared with the best of Christian knights, like Godfrey de Bouillon. His name was Saladin. The Turks called their leaders not Caliphs, but Sultan (the word sultanas, raisins fit for a Sultan, comes from it). And led by the great Sultan Saladin the Turks stormed into the Holy Land and conquered Jerusalem. But Saladin was a generous foe. None of the women or children in Jerusalem was harmed and they were allowed to leave Jerusalem and to go to Tyre in the north of the Holy Land which was still held by Christian knights. And even the men who were taken prisoners were well treated and if their families paid a ransom for them, they were released. The Christian Crusaders had never treated the Turks so generously.

The fall of Jerusalem in 1187 was sad and bitter news to the people in the Christian lands of Europe. Again the call for a Crusade went out and three powerful rulers agreed to join forces and to lead their armies together against the Turks. One was the King of England, Richard Lionheart, the other was

Philip, King of France, and the third was Duke Leopold of Austria.

But from the beginning, the pride and jealousy between these three rulers was so strong that they could not work together. The jealousy between the French and the English was so great that they would not attack a Turkish fortress together — it was arranged that one day the French and one day the English should attack. In the end the fortress surrendered and Sultan Saladin paid a great ransom for the Turkish soldiers and they were allowed to go back to him. But the King of France and Richard Lionheart quarrelled so fiercely over the division of the gold that the French king decided he had had enough of the Crusade, and sailed home with his army.

Soon after that Richard Lionheart had another quarrel with the Duke of Austria. The Austrians had stormed the walls of a Turkish fortress and put up their flag, but Richard came and tore it down. And so the Austrians, too, left Richard, swearing they would revenge the insult. The English now had to fight Saladin and the Turks alone. But Richard Lionheart, although he was proud and conceited, was a fearless leader and his knights loved him. There is a little story which shows how faithful the English knights were to Richard Lionheart, as well as showing what a great and noble person Sultan Saladin was.

On one occasion Richard Lionheart and a few knights left the great camp of the English army and went hunting. The hunt took them further and further away until they were many miles from their soldiers. Suddenly a band of Turkish horsemen appeared and attacked the little group of hunters. The Crusaders fought valiantly, but there were too many Turks. Suddenly one of the English knights called out: "I am Richard, the King. Come and fight me, you cowards!" Immediately all the Turks turned on him and threw ropes over him to bring this precious prisoner alive to Saladin. And while they were busy with this important prisoner the real Richard and the other knights galloped away and escaped. The brave knight was brought before Sultan Saladin who immediately recognized that the prisoner was not King Richard. The knight told Saladin what he had done, and Saladin praised him and sent a message

to Richard Lionheart that for ten Turkish prisoners he could have his faithful knight back. Of course, Richard agreed gladly.

For a whole year the English Crusaders battled against the Turks. But despite their courage this small army could not regain Jerusalem. They came so near that they could see the Holy City in the distance, but they could not come any closer, they could not defeat Saladin.

In that year of battles Richard and Saladin had learned not only to respect but even thought very highly of each other. And so they came together to make peace. Saladin, of course, would not give up Jerusalem, it remained in the hands of the Turks, but he agreed that Christian pilgrims could come to Jerusalem unhindered and could worship in the holy places. That was all Richard could achieve, and more than he could hope for because Saladin might just as easily have kept the pilgrims out.

So Richard set out for home, for England. But his troubles were not yet over. The ship in which he sailed was wrecked in a storm and he barely escaped with his life. Disguised as a pilgrim he made his way through Greece, the Balkans, and up the River Danube through Austria. But there he was recognized by a man who had been in the Crusade, and the Duke of Austria had not forgotten the insult. Richard Lionheart was taken and imprisoned in a castle on the Danube.

His people in England had no news from him; they did not know whether he was alive or dead. But Richard had a faithful friend, a minstrel called Blondin who went to search for his King. He went from castle to castle singing a tune he and King Richard had often sung together. After many months he came to Castle Durenstein where Richard was kept — and when Blondin sang the first bars of the tune he heard a voice inside the castle sing the next bars. Now he knew where King Richard was. He hastened back to England and the English lords offered such a great ransom to the Duke of Austria that he agreed to let Richard return. So ended the last of the great Crusades.

20. The Changes in Europe

The Crusades started with a wonderful enthusiasm — noblemen sold their lands, fathers left their families, knights and villains went willingly to give their life in order to rescue the Holy Land from the Turks.

But what happened later? After they had taken Jerusalem the Crusaders who had settled in the Holy Land lived more like Orientals than Christians. And the Crusaders from Europe quarrelled among themselves so much that they could not defeat the Turks.

So in the end the Holy Land was again taken by the Turks, and of the Crusaders' Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, nothing remained except a few ruined castles. While the Crusades seemed to be just a terrible waste of human lives, a great effort and great suffering for nothing, it was not quite such a waste. While the people in Europe had hoped in vain to gain the Holy Land, Europe gained in the end a great deal — it gained things no one had thought of when the Crusades started.

A peasant from France or from Britain had only ever seen his poor little piece of land in his homeland and the clumsy ways of farming of his father and grandfather. He had lived in a crude cottage and did not even know that life could be different. And then this man "took the Cross," he went east and he saw the Orient. And when he came back again he surprised the people of his village when he opened a little bag and showed a few seeds, saying: "We and our fathers before us have never known any other wheat than one with short stalks and about six grains on each ear. But in the East I have seen wheat with proud long stalks and twenty grains or more on each ear. I have brought the seed grains with me. In a few years time we shall all have three times or four times more golden yield in our fields — three or four times more food for ourselves."

And then he also said: "Another thing I saw was that people in the Orient use cows' manure to keep their fields fertile. That's another thing to give us more and better food. But I have not finished," said the returned Crusader, "I have also brought seeds of plants you have never seen before: cabbage, carrots, spinach, cauliflower. And also fruit you have never heard of: apricots, peaches, plums."

The village people could hardly believe him — but a few years later they saw his rich yield of corn, his tasty vegetables, his juicy fruit and asked the Crusader for seeds of these wonderful plants. So the Crusades brought better ways of farming, new and better food to Europe.

Another thing the Crusaders had never seen before was a beautiful flower-garden. And they liked the gardens so much that they brought the flower-seeds and the art of gardening back to Europe. Certain flowers — tulips, lilies and carnations — and the love of flowers, the knowledge of when to plant each kind, were brought to Europe by the Crusaders. And they also brought home the art of making scent, perfume from flowers. As well as the word *sugar, candy* and *syrup* are Arab words, and the knowledge to make candy and syrup was brought to Europe by the Crusaders.

Before the Crusades, people in Europe knew no other seating than hard chairs or stools. But in the East they saw people recline comfortably on cushioned seats called *sofa* and *divan* in Arabic. And they also saw that the Arabs did not sleep on the wooden planks of a bed but put something on the boards which they called *mattress*. These word as well as the objects came to Europe through the Crusades.

The story of paper is interesting. It was the Chinese who first invented a way to use sawdust and old rags adding water and acid to make a soggy mess called "pulp," and then spreading the pulp in thin layers on a board. When it dried it became a sheet of paper. The Chinese were the first to have paper. The Arabs in one of their expeditions to the East captured some Chinese and from these prisoners learned how to make paper. The Crusaders learnt it from the Arabs and brought the knowledge to Europe.

But it was a smith in the city of Damascus who discovered

that if you take an iron sword and heat it red hot and then plunge it suddenly in cold water, the iron becomes not only harder but also more flexible — it had become steel. The making of steel was another thing brought back by the Crusaders.

To their surprise the Crusaders saw Turkish and Arab sailors on their sea-journey use a little piece of magnetic iron which always pointed north — a compass. But this too was originally a Chinese invention. From the Turks the Crusaders learned the use of drums for marching, it made marching easier to follow the steady beat of the drum.

In the workshops of the East the Crusaders saw beautiful leather work; they saw beautifully carved and varnished furniture; they saw cloth dyed in many colours. All this was unknown in Europe and now became known through the Crusaders. New crafts grew up in Europe, and soon the people in Europe could make things which the Arabs and Turks liked and were willing to pay for. And so, through trade, money began to come back to Europe.

Through the Crusades great improvements came about in all peoples' lives: food, flowers, comforts. But there was also something else — a great change in peoples' minds. The people who went on the first Crusades considered anyone who was not a Christian like themselves to be an evil person; they could not imagine that anyone who was not a Christian by religion could be kind, generous or, in any way, a good person. And because they had this stupid idea in their heads they were so merciless in their battles. But then they came to know such people as Sultan Saladin, a man who was not a Christian, but had more fairness, nobility and courage than many a Christian knight. Even Richard Lionheart — who did not respect other people easily — felt deep respect and admiration for Saladin. And so people in Europe began to realize that a person is good through their heart, and not because they are a Christian or a Jew or a Muslim — that one must respect a person for what they are by themselves and must not judge them by their religion.

In the Orient the Crusaders also met people who were Christians but did not recognize the authority of the Pope, like the people of Constantinople. And some of them began to won-

der if there could not be a Christian Church which was not held down by the Pope in Rome.

And the Arab's knowledge of science, like astronomy or medicine, also stirred the minds of the Europeans. So not only material things, but also *ideas* changed through the Crusades. The people of Europe had not gained the Holy Land, but they had become more awake, more open to the world, and this was the real gain of the Crusades.

Europe had become richer in material things as well as in ideas. Without the Crusades the Christian peoples of Europe would have carried on in their simple and primitive ways without even knowing that life could be different.

21. Gilbert and Rohesia

The Crusades had set out to liberate the Holy Land and Jerusalem, but despite the initial success under Godfrey of Bouillon, they lost the city to Saladin. However, he was a generous foe and gave his permission that from now on Christian pilgrims could visit Jerusalem.

For Christians of that time a visit to Jerusalem, a pilgrimage, meant so much that many made the long, arduous journey for the sake of seeing the places where Christ had walked on earth. The journey was not only hard, it was also full of dangers. If a pilgrim got as far as Jerusalem he had nothing to fear for the Turks kept Saladin's promise. But if on their journey a band of robbers attacked, taking the Christians prisoners and selling them as slaves, there was no one to help them and no Turkish ruler took any notice what happened to them. Yet, in spite of these dangers, the pilgrims still came. And sometimes strange things happened.

A merchant of London, a young man whose name was Gilbert went on such a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But he was one of the unfortunate pilgrims: the little band of Christians with whom he travelled were attacked by robbers before they got to Jerusalem, they were taken prisoners and sold as slaves.

Gilbert was sold to a rich man who used him as a gardener. During the day Gilbert tended the flower-beds and trees in the large garden, but at night-time he was locked up in a dungeon because his master feared he might try to run away. It was a hard life for young Gilbert and he thought he would never in his life enjoy freedom again.

Now his master had a beautiful daughter whose name was Rohesia. She often walked in the garden and saw the handsome young Englishman, and the more she saw of him, the better she liked him.

And Gilbert, too, grew fond of the dark-haired beauty. He had learned enough of the Arabic language to speak to her, but during the day, when there were other servants and the master himself about, the two young people could not speak of their love for each other. The master would have killed Gilbert if he had suspected his daughter was in love with this wretched Christian slave.

But Rohesia came at night-time to the door of Gilbert's prison and they whispered together through the iron-bars, yet always in fear that someone might come and it would all end in disaster. Gilbert told Rohesia of the City of London where his home was and she could hear from every word he said how he longed to be back in his own land again and to be a free man again.

One night she came with great excitement: she had got hold of the big key to the door of Gilbert's prison. She unlocked the door and told him: "You must flee and go back to your own land and your city of London."

Gilbert was overjoyed that at long last he had an opportunity to escape. But he was also fond of Rohesia. She could not come with him; a single man might, perhaps, succeed in getting away, but a man and a woman together would be caught in no time. And so Gilbert said: "I must leave you now, dear Rohesia. But I shall not forget you and one day I will send for you. Whatever happens, no one but you shall be my wife one day."

And so they parted. Gilbert was fortunate, as he spoke Arabic and wore Arab dress he was not recognized by people as a foreigner and was not caught. He made his way to a port and found a ship that took him to Italy and from there he sailed home and arrived safely in London.

In London he had first of all to work hard to get his business going again after so many years' absence. And when, at long last, his business was in order, and he thought of Rohesia, it turned out that he could do nothing for her. He could not go back to Turkey, for escaping from slavery was a crime. Nor could he find anyone else willing to carry a message to her, or to fetch her. He could see no ray of hope that he would ever see Rohesia again.

In the meantime poor Rohesia waited and waited, but there was no news from Gilbert. And in the end she could wait no longer; she decided to flee and to go to Gilbert. She took some precious jewels which she owned, and one night fled from her father's house.

She reached a port, and there she saw many ships of many nations, Italian ships, French ships, Greek ships. But poor Rohesia could only speak her own language. The only foreign words she knew were: "Gilbert" and "London." How could she make these French and Italian and Greek captains understand what she wanted? She went from ship to ship saying: "Gilbert, London. Gilbert, London," and holding out her gems.

At first the sailors laughed at her and thought she was mad. But then they felt sorry for the beautiful girl who looked so desperate and kept on repeating the same words: "Gilbert, London," and one of them said: "I know what she means, she wants to go to London. I have no idea who this Gilbert is — but we can at least help her to get to London." And so a captain was found whose ship was bound for London, and who took Rohesia on board his ship and she gave him her jewels to pay for her fare.

At long last the ship reached London and Rohesia stepped ashore. There she was, in this great city without money and knowing only two words of the language. The streets were crowded with people, and all were dressed quite differently from Rohesia in her oriental robes. They all stared at her, and they stared even more when she addressed them repeating only one word: "Gilbert, Gilbert." People shook their heads at this strange woman; some laughed, some pitied her, but they all talked about her.

Rohesia was undaunted by all the stares and laughs. Untiringly she went from street to street, saying: "Gilbert, Gilbert," until people all over London told each other of the foreign woman who said nothing but Gilbert.

Now Gilbert himself was in his house, worried and unhappy that he had not been able to keep his promise. But then he heard people outside talking and saying his name again and again. He wondered why people should talk about him and went out to

see what was the matter. And just as he came out into the street someone said: "There she comes, the foreign lady who says Gilbert, Gilbert and nothing else." And as he looked, he saw Rohesia and she saw him, and in a moment she was in his arms.

Gilbert married Rohesia, and the son who was born to them became a great man, Thomas à Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury.

22. The Growth of Cities

While the Crusades were a failure because the Holy Land remained in the hands of the Muslims, Europe gained new knowledge. The pilgrims and the Crusaders brought back better grain, new plants to eat (cabbage, cauliflower), new fruit (apricots), new crafts (glass-making, leather work), better ways of building, and many other changes. The most important of all the changes that came with the Crusades was the growth of cities.

The ancient Romans loved life in big towns and cities — Roman life was concentrated in cities. But when the Germanic tribes destroyed the Roman Empire they also destroyed the cities. The Germanic tribes did not like to be crowded together in cities, but preferred the free, open countryside. And so many cities declined or disappeared. They lived in villages of serfs and villains, huddling under the protection of a castle, and few people ventured away from their own little village.

But when the Crusades came, for instance the little fishermen's village of Venice on the coast of Italy suddenly grew. Crusaders and pilgrims wanted to go by sea to the Holy Land, and paid the fishermen to take them over in their boats. These fares paid by thousands of travellers made the fishermen rich. Venice grew into a city of wealthy merchants. And when the people of Europe grew fond of spices with their food, it was again the merchants of Venice who carried the spices from the East to Europe and made huge profits. Venice became even richer and bigger, it could afford its own army of mercenaries who were paid to fight for Venice. It had become a rich and powerful city built on business and trade.

And similar things happened all over Europe. Pilgrims and Crusaders travelled on rivers — it was quicker and safer than the poor roads of that time, and where these travellers stopped for a

rest or for food cities began to grow. It was again trade which built the cities.

Business and trade was what made new cities rise in Europe. But there was something else. Before the Crusades villains and serfs were hardly better off than slaves, but a villain or serf who came back from the Crusades had seen the world, had perhaps learned a new craft, and had no wish to go back to a life of serfdom to a knight. A serf could do two things to gain freedom: he could buy his freedom by paying his master a sum of money — but not many serfs had enough to buy their freedom — or he could simply run away. Just running away was not much use, for fleeing from one's lord was a crime punishable by death. But there was a special law for the new cities: if a serf or villain ran away from his lord and came into a city, and if he lived in the city without being caught for a year and a day, he was free, and his master could neither claim him nor punish him. The serf had become a free man.

A good many serfs and villains escaped to the new cities to live as free men. In a city no one could "own" a fellow man, every member of the city was a free person, a citizen or burgher, and very proud of it. The free citizens chose or elected their own city government, the town council. No knight, no lord could rule them, and even knights had to respect the freedom of the cities.

And so the cities became places where freedom could grow while the castles and villages were still places of serfdom. So the Crusades started business and trade in the cities, and as the cities grew they also became the birth place of a new freedom in Europe.

Now, what did a medieval city look like? Approaching from a distance we would see a great wall round the city. On the wall were watch-towers, and there were gates and drawbridges over the moat below the wall. Every city was like a fortress, ready to defend itself. All citizens were trained in the use of arms, specially in the use of the cross-bow which was also an invention that had come from the Orient.

In the centre of the city there was a high tower, called the belfry. High up in this tower there was always a watchman on duty ready to ring a great bell if he saw any armed force appear.

And passing through one of the gates into the city, we would immediately have realized that the great wall which protected the city also had disadvantages. Once the wall was built the city could no longer grow and spread, new people came, new houses were built, but all in the space inside the walls. And so a medieval city was terribly crammed and crowded: the houses were huddled together, the streets were incredibly narrow — barely wide enough for an ox-cart — and they twisted and turned in every direction.

But the worst of these winding streets was that everyone treated them as rubbish-heaps. There was no sanitation or lavatories in the houses. Buckets full of refuse were emptied through the windows into the street below, and if a dog or a cat died it was also thrown out into the street. In and out of this rubbish and dirt walked pigs and chickens and rats looking for food.

At night there is no street lighting. At nine o'clock the curfew bell tolled from a tower. Curfew comes from *couvre feu* (cover the fire), and when this bell tolled all lights — candles and burning torches (there was no other light) — had to be extinguished. This was to prevent fires at night. In the dark the night-watchmen patrolled the streets to prevent burglary and theft. The night-watchmen sang every hour what time it was.

There was only one large open space in the city, the market-place. On a weekday morning the peasants from the surrounding countryside came in to sell milk, butter and vegetables to the housewives. In the market-place you might see an important-looking man swinging a hand-bell — the town-crier. When a crowd of people had been called together by his bell he told them the important news or proclamations from the town-council. Today we have newspapers, radio and television. In those days the town-crier was all these rolled into one.

In another corner of the market place there were the stocks and the pillory, to punish butchers, bakers or other tradesmen who cheated their customers. They had to sit or stand in these wooden frameworks which had holes for the head and limbs, and their fellow-citizens could heap abuse and scorn on them.

As in the Orient all shops of the same trade were in the same

street, cobbler's lane, tailor's street, and so on. These shops had only picture signs (a shoe, a pair of scissors, a barber's pole) because most people could not read.

You might think there was no beauty in such a city of the Middle Ages. But there was. Coming out of a narrow lane you might see a great church with high, lofty spires. These churches are called Gothic, a style of building that came after the Crusades. These churches had stained glass windows; from the inside they glowed in wonderful colours as the light shone through them. And the pointed arches above were like hands in prayer.

These stained glass windows were so big that there is very little wall left between them, and you wonder how such narrow wedges of wall could support the high vaults and the great tower above them. But the vaults and the tower are supported by rows of strong pillars inside the church and by flying buttresses outside. And outside and inside the Gothic church had stone and wood carvings showing stories of the Old and New Testament.

In the Dark Ages before the Crusades, Europe had been poor, without freedom and with little art or beauty. Now within the Gothic churches, art and beauty came back. The cities of the Middle Ages were crowded and unsanitary compared with our cities, but they were the cradle of freedom and art, of a new civilization in Europe.

23. King John and the Magna Carta

The cities where all citizens were equal, were the cradles of freedom in Europe. Under the old feudal system there were serfs, above them villains, above them knights and above them the King. In this feudal system everyone (except the King) had an overlord who had to be obeyed. But with the cities something new came: men of the city only obeyed the Town Council which they themselves had elected. The citizens did not belong to the feudal system.

At first it was only the city people, the burghers, who had this kind of freedom, but in time the whole feudal system stopped. One of the most important changes in British history came in the year 1215.

Richard Lionheart, the valiant Crusader, was away from England for many years, first on his Crusade, then as a prisoner in Austria. So he could only give very little time to the task of ruling England. When he returned he did not live long and died without leaving any children. Now Richard had two brothers. Geoffrey had died before Richard and so his son, Arthur, was to inherit the throne. But Arthur was only a young boy, and so another brother of Richard, John, became King.

King John was as wicked and evil a man as ever ruled a country. The story of his misdeeds and cruelty would fill books. One of his first misdeeds was against his nephew, the boy Arthur. John wanted him out of the way, so when Arthur grew up he could not claim the throne.

When England had been conquered by William of Normandy, he remained master of Normandy on the other side of the Channel. And the Kings of England who followed him, ruled England as well as Normandy. The north of France across

the Channel was at that time under the rule of the Kings of England.

King John sent his little nephew to a lonely castle in Normandy where he was kept prisoner. And one day King John came to visit the castle and spent the night there. We shall never know what happened that night, but the little Prince Arthur was never seen again.

Having made sure that there was no competitor for the throne, John now showed his noblemen, the knights of England, that, as their overlord, he stood above the law. He could do as he liked.

One of the English noblemen was engaged to a very beautiful lady. King John saw her, and decided he wanted her for himself. So he sent armed men who captured her when she went for a walk and then she was held captive in a castle until, in the end, she agreed to marry King John.

And so it was in many other things. King John showed that no one had any rights in his land: not his noblemen, not the priests, not the common people; he took from anybody what he liked and he used his soldiers against anybody who resisted. This brother of the noble Richard Lionheart became one of the worst tyrants in British history.

But by this time, people were no longer willing to put up with such treatment. A number of English lords and noblemen met secretly and swore an oath that they would help each other to force this wicked king to respect the rights of his people.

They made a list of all the things a king should not be allowed to do, and they also wrote down the rights which everyone in the land should have and that no one could take from him. A list was called a charter in those days, and this long list was called the Great Charter or, in Latin, *Magna Carta.*

The Magna Carta, the great list of rights, is one of the most famous documents in history. One of the original copies is in the British Library in London. Today we take it for granted that the Queen or the Government cannot simply come and take our property away; we take it for granted that no person can be thrown into prison just because some powerful man does not like him or her. But all this was quite possible until these

English knights wrote in the Magna Carta that it should not be possible. That is why the Magna Carta is so important; for the first time the peoples of a country laid down rules for their kings and wrote down their rights which no king could take from them.

When the knights had made this list, the Magna Carta, they took it to King John and asked that he should sign it with his name, to show that he would from now on respect the rules laid down in it. But King John refused — no one was to have any rights but the King himself.

Now at other times it had often happened that the people of England were not united among themselves. The common people were pleased when the noblemen were in trouble, the knights and noblemen often had quarrels and fights with the cities, and the church-people, the priests, used to be on the side of the King. But this time they were all — priests and knights, peasants and citizens — united against King John.

A great army was gathered and marched towards London to force King John to put his name to the Magna Carta. And when King John tried to get his army together, he found that, in the whole of England, only seven knights were ready to fight for him.

So King John could do nothing but meet the rebels. This meeting took place at Runnymede, near London, in the year 1215.

Once again the noblemen put the Magna Carta before King John for his signature. King John cursed and swore, he shouted: "Why don't you ask me to give my whole kingdom away?" But when he looked at the stern faces around him he knew that these men were prepared to kill him unless he put his signature to the Magna Carta. So he signed. But when he later returned to his palace he was in such a fit of rage that he threw himself on the floor, screaming and cursing. But the Magna Carta was signed, and the power of kings was no longer what it had been before. The King was no longer all-powerful but had to respect the rights of his people.

The most important rule of the Magna Carta was that no one could be put in prison or punished unless he had first been

properly tried and found guilty by a court of law. We take it for granted, but it was not so before the Magna Carta — people could be jailed and executed on the wish of a king, without any trial.

Another rule of the Magna Carta was that the King could not go to war with another country, and he could not raise taxes without the agreement of the people.

Of course, it was not possible to go round and ask every person in the land whether they agreed, and so there was a Common Council as it was called — a group of people who could speak for the whole country and agree or disagree with the King. Without this Common Council the king could do nothing.

This Common Council was the beginning of our Parliament. At first only noblemen and bishops were in this Common Council, but later the city merchants came and, in the end, people from all walks of life could be elected for it.

So our present kind of Government had its first beginning with the Magna Carta signed by King John at Runnymede in 1215.

Of course, it took many centuries until our kind of Government came about — quite a number of kings tried to do away with the rules of the Magna Carta — but they never succeeded. It remained the charter of freedom. For the first time (since the Roman Republic) people had a say in the ruling of their land. Our legal rights and Parliament began with the Magna Carta.

24. Scotland and England

Freedom began in the cities where serfs and villains could become free men. Then the King, the pinnacle of the feudal system, was forced to sign the Magna Carta, and so more freedom came to all people of England. But all this was only the first step on the path to freedom. We now come to whole nations fighting for their freedom against foreign invaders who oppressed them. And one of the first of these nations who fought for their freedom were the Scots.

In Roman times there were only wild, warlike tribes in Scotland: the Picts and the Scots who had come from Ireland. Christianity came late to these fierce warriors of the north; it came about AD 400 and the first to teach Christianity in this region was Ninian, who built a church and monastery in Galloway. But the greatest work in bringing the message of Christ to Scotland was done by Columba. From the monastery on the island of Iona, he and his helpers travelled from tribe to tribe and did not rest until all Picts and Scots had become Christians.

Later still the Picts and Scots became one nation, but they lost some of their land to the Vikings who came and settled on the east coast of Scotland. In time the descendants of the Vikings too became part of the Scots nation — the Lowlanders. The Gaelic-speaking Scots remained in the Highlands. But they were all now one kingdom.

The Kingdom of Scotland was on good terms with the Kingdom of England in the south. The Scots King Malcolm Canmore married an English princess, Margaret. She was a cultured woman and did much to change the rough, wild ways of the Scots. More churches were built, merchants came who brought fine clothes the Scots had never seen before, and the queen set such an example of charity for the poor, and showed

such gentleness and kindness that she was later called St Margaret of Scotland.

When the Normans came to England under William the Conqueror the friendship between north and south of Britain did not change. The Kings of Scotland even invited Norman noblemen to Scotland and gave them land. So, many of the noblemen of Scotland were of Norman origin.

So Scotland had become a prosperous country, at peace with its neighbour to the south, when a great misfortune happened. One dark night in 1286 the King who was then ruling Scotland, Alexander III, was thrown off his horse, fell down a cliff, and died. There was only a grand-daughter to follow him and she was a little girl, Margaret (the Maid of Norway). Then she too died. Who was now to rule Scotland? The King who ruled England at this time was Edward (1272–1307), the grandson of King John and Edward thought that he should become King of Scotland as well as of England for no better reason than that he was a distant relative of the little girl who had died.

A Scots nobleman, John Balliol, who had in the meantime been crowned as King as Scotland, simply gave up when the English armies invaded Scotland. The Scots suddenly saw their country overrun by the English, and in a few weeks Edward had Scotland at his mercy. He left English troops in different parts of Scotland to keep the Scots in order, and returned to England, well pleased with his easy success. But the Scots had not given up. A brave Scots knight, William Wallace, gathered men who were willing to fight for the freedom of Scotland, and they began to attack the castles and fortresses of the English troops. And stronghold after stronghold was taken.

Edward of England was not going to let the Scots shake off the English yoke, he came with a great army from the south. And this time the English took a terrible revenge — villages and cities were destroyed, and the English left a trail of ruin and death.

Wallace had no army strong enough; he was defeated at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298, his men scattered, and Wallace himself became a hunted man with no home but the wild hills. He found shelter among the Highland crofters, but he could stay

nowhere long, for King Edward had promised a great reward for his capture and not only the English soldiers, but also some treacherous Scots, were eager to gain the prize. In the end a Scotsman betrayed Wallace and he was taken by the English, brought to London and cruelly put to death.

But if Edward thought this was the end of the Scottish rebellion, he was mistaken. A new leader rose among the Scots, a nobleman, Robert the Bruce. At first only a few knights came to his side — but they did one thing: in 1306 they crowned Bruce King of Scotland on the ancient stone of Scone.

Things went badly for the new King of Scotland; his little army was defeated by the English. He had to flee and, like Wallace, Bruce with a few companions had to live in the Highlands, hunted from place to place with a price on their heads.

Many a time Bruce was so downhearted that he thought it would be better to surrender to the English. But one day he saw a little spider trying to climb up one silken strand of its web — failing and trying, failing and trying — until, at last it succeeded. And seeing how the little spider had not given up, he decided he too would not give up and go on trying to fight the English.

And as time went by, more and more Scotsmen, knights and common people came and joined Bruce. And the time came when Bruce was no longer in hiding but led Scots armies against the English, and eight years after his coronation, the English were driven from Scotland

Edward had died, but his son, Edward II, gathered a tremendous army and so it came to one of the famous battles in Scots history, the battle of Bannockburn in 1314 at midsummer. And in this battle the English were utterly defeated — they left thousands of dead and the survivors fled in terror. After this the English gave up the idea of conquering Scotland. But the peace and friendship that used to be between the two kingdoms had gone.

In 1320, there was a great gathering of Scotsmen at Arbroath and on this occasion they sent a message to the Pope in Rome in which they said: "We have not been fighting for glory or for riches, but for that freedom which to every good man is as dear

as his life." Freedom had come to mean to people as much as life.

And Wallace and Robert the Bruce (whose statues stand on either side of the entrance gate of Edinburgh Castle) are to be remembered not only as valiant Scots, but as fighters for freedom; and Wallace was the one who had really given his life for freedom.

25. England and France, Joan of Arc

The story of Wallace and Bruce shows how freedom came to mean more and more in the life of the people. But all this was still only the beginning. In these early days it was quite possible for people to demand freedom for themselves, but not to respect the freedom of others. The English had made King John sign the Magna Carta; they were not going to be oppressed and ill-treated by a king. They had gained some freedom for themselves, but they did not respect the freedom of other nations. They had oppressed the Scots, and only after years of war and after the battle of Bannockburn had they learnt that other nations too loved their freedom.

But even after Bannockburn the English had not taken this to heart. If England could not make conquests in the north, there was another possibility in the south, across the Channel, in France.

The wars between England and Scotland did not last so very long — about fifteen years. The other war, the war between England and France lasted much longer — it lasted a hundred years, and it is called the Hundred Years' War.

In this Hundred Years' War the English had great advantages on their side. Firstly there were in England, in the land of the Magna Carta, a great number of free men who owned their own land. These free men, called yeomen, were just as keen to fight, to plunder and to gain riches through war, as were the knights and noblemen. These yeomen brought with them a terrifying weapon: the longbow. The longbow was as high as a man, and an arrow shot from this great bow had such force that it could pierce the strongest armour.

In France, it was quite different. There were no free peasants, they were still only villains and serfs who had little or no training with any weapon and so, if their lords, the knights, used them as soldiers, they were not very effective.

Another thing in favour of the English was this: since the Magna Carta no English King could go to war without the agreement of the people. But the people of England were in favour of a war against France, for they hoped to gain riches and wealth through the conquest.

The people of France, though, had no say in these things. They fought because they were told to fight, and they had to fight for kings and noblemen who cared little for the common people. A French knight looked down on anybody who was not of noble birth. This again did not make good soldiers of the peasants of the peasants.

Thirty years after the wars with Scotland had come to an end, the long war, the Hundred Years' War, between England and France started. It began — like the Scottish war — when the King of France died and left no heir. Again the King of England (Edward III) claimed that, by some distant relationship, he was the rightful successor.

But the French did not agree, and the war started. The English crossed the channel in their ships, and already in the first battle the yeomen's arrows brought down so many French knights that the surviving French army fled. The English now went from town to town, burning and plundering. But France is a large country and new armies were sent to stop the English.

And then the fighting came to a stop because a new enemy came which killed indiscrimately Frenchmen and Englishmen, knights and peasants, men and women. It was an epidemic called the Black Death or Black Plague. It came from Africa, perhaps carried to Europe by sailors or pilgrims. But whatever brought the plague to Europe, it was a terrible disease. People struck by it died within two to three days with terrible black sores on their skins. In two years about half the population of Germany, Italy, France and Britain died. In some villages out of a hundred people only five or six survived.

When this terrible pestilence had gone Europe was in such a

terrible state that no one could think of waging war. But the war between England and France had not ended, it was only postponed. And forty years after the Black Death, England felt it was time to continue with the war.

Once again the English began with a great victory at Agincourt where English bowmen killed great numbers of French knights. By the year 1429 the whole north of France was in the hands of the English.

One of the most powerful noblemen of France, the Duke of Burgundy, who commanded a large army, had gone over to the English and fought on their side.

The King of France (chosen by the noblemen) had died. His son, Charles, could not even become king because according to the laws of France, he could only become king by being crowned in the great cathedral of the city of Rheims, and this city was in the possession of the English.

Charles could therefore not call himself King, but only crown-prince, or as the French called it Dauphin.

And this Dauphin Charles was neither very brave nor very clever. He was a weak youngster who planned to flee to Scotland, and let the English take France.

At this moment, when the French noblemen and the French Dauphin had given up all hope, when nothing but a miracle could save France, a miracle did happen. It was not a valiant knight who saved France, not even a brave man, but a girl, a humble peasant girl: Joan of Arc.

Joan was a simple, good-natured girl who had no ambition to do great deeds. She loved her country France and was sad to see it devastated by the English invaders, but it would not have occurred to her that she could do anything about it. It was not her own wish but a message from a higher world which made her do things that amazed everybody. She saw the Archangel Michael and he commanded her to go and help the Dauphin, and to help France.

It was with the utmost difficulty that she reached the Dauphin, and it was even harder to convince him and his knights that she, a peasant and a girl, was chosen to drive the English from France. She finally did convince them, and,

dressed and armed like a knight, she led France into battle.

From the moment this uneducated, untrained girl took command, the English lost battle after battle. She took Rheims and Charles was duly crowned king. She then continued the fight, but by now some French leaders were jealous of the success of this strange girl and they arranged that she was taken prisoner by the friend of the English, the Duke of Burgundy, who promptly handed her over to his English allies.

The English could only believe that Joan had gained her victories by witchcraft, that she had been helped by the devil. And as a witch she was condemned to be burnt at the stake. When the flames rose around her, Joan asked piteously for a cross to give her strength. A common English soldier had the kindness to pick up a stick, break it in two, bind them together and to hand this rough cross to the girl. And as the flames hid her from sight, another English soldier said: "We are lost — we have burned a saint."

He was right. The English had lost. A new spirit had been born among the French and in the end the English were driven from France. Joan of Arc was later recognized as a true saint who had done the bidding of Michael, the Archangel.

26. Printing and Gunpowder

A simple peasant girl, Joan of Arc, saved France from the English. Although she was burnt at the stake before the English were driven out, she had brought a new spirit to the French and, in the end, the English were driven from France. Yet the English should really be grateful to Joan of Arc: If there had been no Joan of Arc, and the English *had* conquered France, which was not only a bigger country, but also richer, this kingdom would soon have become much more French than English. And, as France was a rich country, there was no reason for the French to venture out to sea in search of wealth — the French had no need to become great sailors, or to seek their fortune overseas. And if England and France had been *one* kingdom, the English would not have bothered much about venturing out on great sea voyages either; the English would never have become a seafaring nation.

The Angel who told Joan of Arc to drive the English from France was not only helping France, but helped the English to become what they should be: a great sea-faring nation which spread to North America, Australia and New Zealand. England, and Britain as a whole, should be grateful to Joan of Arc.

The spirit of freedom grew in Europe, and the flame of freedom passed from the cities to the men who wrote the Magna Carta, to Wallace and King Bruce who fought for Scotland's freedom, and to Joan of Arc who fought for freedom against a foreign invader. But this spirit of freedom, this new spirit in Europe not only showed itself in wars and battles, but also in the mind of people.

Before the Crusades people in Europe would not even have dreamed of trying something new. Everybody did what his fathers and grand-fathers had done before him, and they

thought like their forefathers had thought. A man was as much under the spell of his forefather's ideas as a serf was under the power of his lord. But all this changed now; new ideas, new inventions were eagerly taken up. And some of the inventions which came at that time changed life completely.

The Chinese had already invented printing: they used to carve words of a page on a piece of wood (in mirror writing), ink it and press it on paper (which was also a Chinese invention). Well, this kind of printing became known in Europe. But it was awkward to carve a whole book on blocks of wood, so no one in Europe used it for book-printing. It was used for something else: for printing the pictures on playing-cards. Playing-cards were printed from wooden blocks, but books were written by hand with quills. And it took at least a year to copy a book like the Bible.

In Mainz, in Germany, a man whose trade probably was making mirrors, began to think about book-printing. One day it occurred to Johann Gutenberg that it would be simpler to make little blocks of wood, one block for one letter, and to put these blocks together into words until they filled the frame of a whole page and the page could now be printed.

Then you took the letters apart and put them together again for the next page — there was no need to carve every page: once you had twenty to thirty carvings of each letter you need do no more carving, you just moved them round for the next page.

This was a brilliant idea which did away with tediously carving each page. Later Johann Gutenberg had another bright idea. Instead of using wood which soon wore out and a new carving had to be made — a slow and difficult task — he would use metal. Lead melts easily, almost as easily as wax. Gutenberg made a copper mould for each letter, and if he wanted a few more As or Bs, he poured molten lead into the mould, let it cool down, and there was his *type,* as it is called. If the lead type became worn it could be melted and recast.

And the third bright idea was that he did not press the frame to the paper by hand (which always smudged the print), but built something which evenly pressed the paper to the frame, which was called a "press."

And now he could print a hundred copies of the first page, re-arrange the letters in the frame for the next page, printing a hundred copies, and so on. And he could print a hundred copies of one book in about three weeks or even less. By hand a hundred writers would have worked a whole year, or one writer a hundred years! Now one man could do it in a few weeks.

Gutenberg had invented the printing press. He hoped to keep his invention a secret, so that only he himself could print books, and get rich. But as he had not enough money to buy the paper, the print, the lead to start with, he had to find a rich partner who lent him the money and who had to know, of course, what the money was for. And as soon as Gutenberg had printed his first book, a beautiful Bible, the partner went and started to print himself. He employed men to help with the work who saw how easy it was, and soon people all over Europe printed books. Gutenberg died a poor man.

But his invention brought great change. Before printing came only few people could afford to buy a few expensive handwritten books — now came the cheap, printed books, and more and more people, even the poorest, could afford to have and to read books. Knowledge became open to all who wanted it.

There was another invention which brought enormous changes, and we don't even know really who made this invention. The Chinese had already used a mixture of coal dust, sulphur (a yellow powder) and saltpetre (a white powder) to make fireworks. Perhaps the Arabs learned it from them, perhaps Europeans learned it from the Arabs. There is another story: an English monk, Roger Bacon had found by his own experiment that such a mixture, touched with a flame would explode with a bang. But he thought it was better people should not know about such things, and wrote about it in his books in such a way that no one could understand. Only much later when people were already using this mixture, did they understand.

But there is still another story though we don't know if it is true. There was a German Franciscan monk, Berthold Schwartz, who liked to make experiments. He did not just experiment for fun. He was one of many men who were at that

me trying to discover one of nature's secrets. How does nature ake gold? But this Franciscan monk was experimenting with ll kinds of things in the hope to discover this secret of nature. Ie had made a mixture of coal-dust, sulphur and saltpetre. And ıen he turned away to poke the fire in his stove, suddenly a ɔark of the fire fell on the mixture, and it went off with a great ang. Schwartz was badly shaken, but he talked about that terri-le bang and how it had happened.

And it was not long before soldiers realized how useful this ıixture could be. They made great mortars which were rather ke long metal pots on wheels, filled them with gun-powder, ıt a great stone on top, and touched it off with a flame. If the one was thrown against the walls of a castle, it had such force :at it shattered the wall.

These were the first cannons and they caused the end of alled castles — walls were no longer a protection. And soon :ople made thin tubes to shoot from, guns and rifles, and that used the end of shields and helmets and armour, and when ields and armour went the knights went too. Once gunpow-r came the days of the proud knights in armour were over.

Modern rifles, machine guns, revolvers, they all came in ne and made wars and battles worse than they had ever been fore.

It seems strange that a Franciscan monk — a follower of ntle, kind Francis of Assisi — should have given to the world npowder, this new weapon to kill men.

miles. But no one knew anything about the real distance at that time. And when Columbus pored over that map of his fellow Italian map-maker he had a great idea.

The Portuguese ships were trying to sail eastwards round Africa to India for the spices. But this eastward journey was more than ten thousand miles long, as they had to sail all around Africa. But if the ships were to sail west across the Atlantic Ocean, it would be a journey of only three thousand miles. And, he — Columbus — would be the first to open a new way to Cathay, a way that went west, across the Atlantic. Of course, Columbus himself was not rich enough to buy a ship, to pay sailors and to buy food for the journey. His dream could only come true if a King would give him ships and sailors to explore the great ocean in the west of Europe.

But this ocean which we call the Atlantic was in those days called the Sea of Darkness, for people believed that beyond the Canary Islands and Madeira, there was an endless dark fog in which no ship could find its way. When Columbus put his idea before the King of Portugal, he found that the days of the adventurous Prince Henry were over, the King had no wish to waste money or ships by sending them into the terrible Sea of Darkness.

At this time Columbus' Portuguese wife died. There was nothing to hold him in Portugal, and he decided to try his luck in the neighbouring country of Spain. So Columbus and his young son left Portugal for Spain. But Columbus' hopes that the Royal Court of Spain would be interested in his idea were dashed. He came at the worst possible time.

At the time Spain was ruled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and it was the Queen who made all important decisions. Queen Isabella was the real ruler and she had set her heart on one great ambition. The southern half of Spain was still in possession of the Arabs, and was still ruled by Muslims. And Queen Isabella who was extremely religious had set her heart on conquering the south of Spain and making it Christian. When Columbus came this war against the Arabs was still going on. Queen Isabella told Columbus she would only consider his idea to sail westwards to Cathay when Granada, the last Arab stronghold, had fallen.

So Columbus had to wait and the waiting was not made easy for him. The Spanish noblemen of the Court despised him as a commoner, the monks and priests who were the advisors of Queen Isabella were against his new-fangled ideas. They said to him: "If you sail your ships round the edge of the world they will fall, you can never sail back again! You must be a fool even to think of it!" It was a very trying time for Columbus.

At long last Granada was taken by the troops of Isabella; the last Muslim stronghold in Europe had fallen and the whole of Spain was under Isabella's rule. But the war had cost a great deal of money and Isabella could not afford to spend money for a wild adventure. The ships sailing into the sea of darkness might never come back and the money would be wasted. And Columbus was told to go and try his luck elsewhere.

Full of bitterness Columbus decided to leave Spain and to go to France or, perhaps, England. He had only gone a short distance and was stopping at an inn when a horseman came galloping to call him back. A Spanish nobleman, Luis de Sant Agel, had offered to lend the money for the expedition. He hoped that Spain, like Portugal, would grow rich from the trade with spices, and that Columbus might find a shorter way to Cathay and India. It seemed to him worth taking a risk as Prince Henry had done.

It was this loan which made it possible that a few months later three ships sailed from Spain, the most famous three ships in the history of exploration. One ship, the Columbus' flagship, in which he sailed, was called *Santa Maria.* Two smaller vessels accompanied the *Santa Maria.*

The day on which they sailed was Friday, August 3, 1492. It was a year which changed the history of the world.

29. The Year 1492

It was not only Toscanelli's map, showing the coast of Asia only three thousand miles west from Portugal (which is, of course, quite wrong), that made Columbus think of sailing out into the Sea of Darkness. There is a story that as a young sailor Columbus had once been to Iceland and heard tales of a land in the west which the Vikings had found, Vinland. Columbus may have thought that Vinland was a part of Asia but, in any case, it was a story that there was land not too far away beyond the Sea of Darkness.

Something else which happened when he was still a mapmaker in Lisbon was that one day a boat with two dead bodies was washed ashore on the coast of Portugal. These bodies were brown-skinned, and Columbus, of course, could only think that they were natives of India, which was a mistake. But he was quite right in thinking that this boat could not have been drifting ten thousand miles, it would have sunk long before reaching land. It could only have come a much shorter distance.

So Columbus was right in one thing: that there *was* a coast only a few thousand miles away across the Sea of Darkness; his mistake — and it was the mistake of Toscanelli, really — was to think that coast beyond the ocean was Asia.

And even making this mistake, Columbus was still wiser than the "learned" monks of Queen Isabella who said if he sailed "down the globe" he could never sail "up" again. One day Columbus got so impatient with their silly arguments that he said to them: "You tell me my voyage is not possible. How do you know what is possible or not? Tell me, is it possible to make an egg stand on this table?"

"Of course not," said the learned monks.

Then Columbus had an egg brought in and he set it so hard

on the table that the shell broke and was flattened and the egg stood. "It *is* possible, and so is my voyage," said Columbus.

And in the end his wish was fulfilled. He was given three ships to sail out into the Sea of Darkness to find China and India, and to bring back gold and spices.

They were good ships — the *Santa Maria* and her companion vessels; the best ships of that time. These kind of ships were called caravels.

These caravels differed from a Viking's dragon ship. A Viking's ship had only one mast and one square sail, but could not sail "close to the wind," that is, at an angle against the wind. If the Vikings wanted to go in the opposite direction of the wind, they had to row and row hard. But the caravels had three masts and three sets of sails (fore, main and mizzen) and could sail close to the wind. So to set sail against the wind they could tack, which means to go in a zig-zag course against the wind.

The caravels were a great improvement compared with the dragon ships. But compared with modern ships they were very small. The *Santa Maria,* the largest, had only room for forty sailors, and the other two vessels carried only twenty-five men each.

They were also very uncomfortable boats. The "bodies" of the caravels were much rounder than modern ships, and, being so small, they pitched and tossed like wash-tubs on the waves. None of these wooden ships was really water-tight, and so the bottom was always filled with bilge-water which had a terrible stench and was a breeding ground for cockroaches. Only the captain had a cabin and bunk (bed) for himself; the crew had to lie down below deck in the stench and among rats and cockroaches. There was only one meal a day, consisting without change of tough, salted meat, dried peas and rock-hard ship's biscuits. Water was carried in wooden kegs and after a few days at sea had a brackish taste.

This was the kind of ship that set out on the most famous voyage in history in August 1492. They were not fast ships. It took them three weeks to reach the last known islands in the Atlantic, Madeira, which had been discovered by Prince Henry's sailors. They only stayed a short while to take in fresh water, and then the real journey into the unknown began.

The first days were perfect, a gentle wind swelled the sails and Columbus kept a steady course due west. But after a week, by the middle of September, the ships encountered something which astonished and frightened the sailors. For miles and miles as far as the eye could see the water was covered with floating sea-weed. And the sailors who had never seen such an endless area of sea-weed, feared the ships would get stuck in the sea-weed, would be unable to move backwards or forwards remaining there forever, and all men dying of hunger and thirst. The sailors fell to their knees and prayed to God. But their fears were unfounded — the ships sailed easily through the weed of the Sargasso Sea, as it is called.

After they had passed through the sea-weeds there came other things to worry the sailors; there came a strong wind which blew the ships with great speed westwards — further and further west — and every mile took them further and further away from their homeland. Now the sailors feared they would be blown to the "rim" of the world. But Columbus quietened their fears and the sailors took new heart.

And so three weeks passed. It was a whole month since they had last seen land! Never before had men been so far away from land, Columbus himself was now uncertain: according to his reckoning they should have reached Japan already but on October 8 there was still no sight of land, only the endless ocean.

Columbus was uncertain but his sailors were desperate; the captains of the other two ships came on board the *Santa Maria* and demanded the ships should turn back. There was no sense in sailing into the blue emptiness that stretched out before them on all sides. And the sailors were wild with fear and excitement. They cursed Columbus calling him a murderer who led them to their deaths. Columbus pleaded with the captains and with the crews: he asked them to sail westward for another three days, and if they should still see no land then they would turn back and sail home to Spain. Grumbling and cursing the sailors agreed.

And now it seemed as if the winds wanted to help Columbus, a strong wind of nearly gale-force rose and drove

the ships with great speed westwards. Columbus hardly slept at all; day and night he stood on the deck waiting for a glimpse of land. The first and second of the three days he had agreed on passed. The third day came ... and went; there was still no land. In the middle of the night — it was October 11 — Columbus saw the flicker of a flame far across the water and the news spread among the sailors. At 2 AM the moon rose and a great cry went out: "Land ahoy, land ahoy!"

In the light of the moon they saw a shimmering white sand-dune and behind it hills rising. The sailors cried and laughed and prayed and sang; no one slept that night.

And when daylight came the sailors saw a crowd of natives gathering on the shore, shouting and talking excitedly among themselves.

Columbus was rowed ashore in a boat and his two captains followed him. He dressed in dark velvet, with purple silk stockings, carrying in one hand a sword and in the other the royal banner of Spain, and was the first to set foot on the new land. The natives stood and stared in wonder as these strange white-skinned visitors knelt down and prayed. Then Columbus stood up and declared the new land to be the possession of their royal majesties, the King and Queen of Spain.

The sailors cheered and then they came and asked his forgiveness for their faint-heartedness three days earlier. Columbus thought he had reached India, but we know that on October 12, 1492, America was discovered.

30. America

The natives of the newly discovered island were peaceful, gentle, and it did not even occur to them to fight the newcomers — quite the contrary, they looked at them with awe and reverence. Having no clothes themselves they touched the sailors' clothes again and again, wondering why these strangers wore extra skins over their own white skin. They brought fruit as gifts, and smiled happily if they were given some glass beads in return.

As Columbus and his sailors believed this island was off the coast of India, they called the natives "Indians," the name is, of course, quite wrong but it has remained to this day as American Indians or Red Indians, although these people have nothing to do with the real Indians of India.

But Columbus and his men were looking for spices, for precious stones or for gold. And as there was nothing of any value on the first island, they soon left and discovered other islands not far away. They did find one island where the natives brought them some gold like little pebbles which are called "nuggets." The natives showed them a river where such nuggets could be found among the pebbles. It was not much gold, but at least Columbus had something to show that his voyage had been worthwhile.

So he started on the return journey with the two smaller caravels — the *Santa Maria* had run aground on an island and was not fit for a long journey. In March 1493, seven months from their departure, Columbus arrived back in Spain. The reception which the King and Queen of Spain gave him was a triumph. Columbus walked at the front of a great procession, and behind him marched Indians carrying gold ornaments and parrots. When Columbus knelt down to kiss the Queen's hand he was invited to sit down beside her. He was appointed governor of the new lands and any others he might still discover.

Soon Columbus sailed again. But this time with a large fleet of ships, and with him came many Spaniards, not as sailors but as passengers — they wanted to settle in the new lands as colonists.

Columbus put the colonists ashore on one island he had discovered on his first journey, the island of Haiti. Then he sailed on for further discoveries. He found a large island, Jamaica, and many smaller ones, but on none of them was what the Court of Spain wanted most of all: gold. When Columbus returned to Haiti, where the Spanish colonists had settled, he found the island plunged in bloodshed and fighting. The new colonists had no intention to work on the land or to go and work river-sand for gold. They had tried to force the natives to work for them as slaves.

They had beaten and ill-treated the natives who either would not work or did not work hard enough, and the natives had revolted. News of this uproar and bloodshed had reached the Court of Spain. Queen Isabella was so upset that another Spaniard, a nobleman, was sent as Governor instead of Columbus. The new governor asked the colonists if they had any complaints against Columbus and when some men who had a grudge came forward and made accusations, the new governor put Columbus in chains and so sent him back to Spain.

When the King and Queen saw the great discoverer brought before them like a criminal in chains, they felt ashamed. The chains were taken off, Columbus was again put in command of ships and he sailed out to make new discoveries.

But from now on ill-luck followed him. The sailors and soldiers who came with him started fights with the natives wherever they landed. There was bloodshed on every island. Ill and exhausted Columbus returned again to Spain only to find that Queen Isabella had died.

King Ferdinand had never cared for Columbus, and now that he no longer had any use for him, he even refused to pay him for his services. Columbus who was too ill to work and earn money was not even allowed to see the King. He could only write letters begging the King for some money. In the end

he was given a pittance, and Columbus died in miserable poverty. But within a few years his discoveries made Spain the richest country in the world.

When Columbus died he did not know that he had discovered a new continent. But ten years after the death of Columbus, another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, visited the new land and wrote a book about what he had seen. People were curious about far-away lands and the book was widely read. Amerigo Vespucci was the first one to say that this land was not India or China, it is a new world. This new continent was called after him: America. So Columbus was not even honoured by naming his discovery after him.

It is strange how many Italians come into this story. Marco Polo told the world of Cathay; Toscanelli thought Cathay could be reached by sailing west instead of east; Columbus *did* sail across the Sea of Darkness and discovered a new continent, and Amerigo Vespucci recognized it was a new continent. They were all Italians.

However, it was not Italy but Spain which profited from the discovery of America. More and more Spaniards went across, driven by greed and by their lust for gold. Wherever they went they enslaved the Indians.

The Spaniards fought and killed until the Indians were defeated, and then they used them as slaves. But the Indians were not very useful slaves: given hard work and little food, beaten and whipped by cruel masters, they died in their thousands. A Spanish monk, Las Casas, was so upset by seeing the Indians die like flies, that he wanted to help them.

He went to the King of Spain and told him that Indians were not really strong enough for hard work, and that Negro slaves from Africa would be much stronger and work better than these poor Indians.

And so a new "trade" began, the most shameful trade in history. Every year about a hundred thousand Negroes were hunted like animals on the west coast of Africa, shipped to America and sold as slaves.

Las Casas, a monk, a servant of Christ, had helped the Indians at the price of bringing untold suffering to millions of

Negroes. That today there are Negroes living in America is the outcome of the ideas of this Spanish monk.

When Columbus set out proudly in the *Santa Maria* on that Friday in August 1492, he could not foresee what his voyage would bring to himself, to Spain, to Europe, to Africa and to the whole world.

31. Pizarro

The time when Columbus discovered America, 1492, is not so very far back in history. It was a time which had already many things in common with our time, there was already that curiosity to discover new things which you find in our time; the ancient Romans were not curious at all — nor were the Germanic tribes who came after the fall of Rome. The Vikings even discovered America but they stopped going to Vinland when they found there were warlike natives. They were not interested in exploring unknown lands.

Even at the time of Marco Polo (two hundred years earlier) only he and his family were keen to make long journeys into unknown regions: the Polos were an exception, other people of their time never went further than the Mediterranean Sea.

But at the time of Columbus people had changed. It was such a great change that from that time onwards life became quite different. Once it became known that Columbus had not landed in Asia but in a new continent, America, thousands and thousands of people were curious about this new world. They were ready to set out and to try and seek their fortune in these new lands.

How different from the people of Marco Polo's time who laughed about his stories but would not dream of travelling to Cathay themselves. But after Columbus, men were ready to cross the sea and penetrate deeper into the new continent. There was something which made these adventurers very keen to explore the new continent. When the Spaniards landed on the east coast of America they found only some peaceful tribes and some savage warriors, who all were hunters, and nomads; they had no cities and no treasures. But from these people the Spaniards heard that far away in the west there were great cities, there were temples with walls lined with gold, and once the

Spaniards heard of gold nothing could hold them back. The lust for gold was like a burning fever in their blood, that disregarded all dangers and hardships.

About two hundred men would band together under a leader, and would go through jungle, cross mountains and rivers braving hunger and thirst, wild animals and savage tribes, burning sun and mountain glaciers, all in the search for gold.

These men were called Conquistadors which of course means conquerors. Hundreds of these Conquistadors perished on the way without ever seeing a glimmer of gold, hundreds came back, half-starved, in rags without having found anything. But some of them did succeed and found gold and treasures beyond their wildest dreams.

The most famous of these Conquistadors was a man called Pizarro. Pizarro had all the best and the worst qualities of the Conquistadors, he was utterly fearless, his courage was quite incredible. On the other hand he was cruel, ruthless; bloodshed meant nothing to him.

Francis Pizarro started his career in life as a swineherd in Spain. There, on the dry, high plateau of Spain he looked after other peoples' herds of pigs. He never went to any school, he never even learned to write his own name. But he was strong and he thought he could do better for himself as a soldier in the Spanish army. So Francis Pizarro became a soldier. After years of fighting in Europe he was sent to America and there he took part in expeditions against the wild tribes. But being a crude, uneducated man, he did not get a high rank in the army, he did not make a great fortune. At the age of fifty he could no longer even hope to get any advancement.

But, just when he was fifty years old, he and his soldiers had captured some natives who told Pizarro of a great kingdom, the kingdom of the Incas, in a land called Peru. And, so they said, the kingdom of the Incas had great wonderful cities and gold was there as plentiful as leaves in the forest.

Other Spaniards had heard these stories before but were daunted by the hundreds of miles of trackless, dense jungle, and the enormous, snow-covered mountain ranges, the Andes, which had to be crossed to get to Peru, the land of the

Incas. But Pizarro was not daunted or put off; he was fired with the idea of getting the gold of the Incas. He needed a band of men to come with him; the men needed equipment, horses, arms, and Pizarro had no money. So he persuaded another soldier, Almagro, who had money to go into partnership with him. Moreover Pizarro managed to obtain a promise from the King of Spain that he would become governor of any land he conquered.

And so in the year 1529, thirty-seven years after the discovery of America, Pizarro set out with 180 men. They had two small cannons and three of these men were armed with muskets, the first kind of rifle.

Between this tiny force and their goal, the land of the Incas, there stood the enormous mountain range of the Andes with towering, snow-covered peaks and yawning precipices. On many parts of this journey the Spaniards had to dismount and climb up the steep slopes leading their horses.

Had they been attacked by natives at that part of their journey, they could have been wiped out in a few minutes, but they met no enemies. Finally they reached the crest of the mountains and made a slow, dangerous descent. As they came down the slopes — it was in the evening — in the light of the setting sun they saw down below the flourishing fields and gardens, the mighty palaces and glittering temple-towers of a great city. And, right in their path, outside the city they saw thousands and thousands of tents, the tents of a great army of thirty thousand Incas — nearly two hundred Incas to every Spaniard.

Yet this great army of Incas showed no hostile intent. When the Spaniards came riding down, their helmets glittering in the setting sun, their banners streaming in the wind, the Incas made no move but they looked at them with utter amazement. They had never seen white men before, men clad in a metal (iron), men mounted on monsters (for they had not seen horses either).

So all that vast army of thirty thousand Incas watched with awe and wonder while Pizarro and his men found a little village outside the city which for some reason had been deserted. In

that little village, the Conquistadors made their camp, and no one interfered.

The next morning Pizarro sent two officers with an interpreter to the King of the Incas in order to invite the King for a friendly visit. The two officers were just as astonished by what they saw in the great city as the Incas had been at the sight of the Spaniards. The Inca civilization in Peru is something which even amazes today. They built towers and palaces from enormous blocks of stones, sixteen to twenty tons, which had come over great distances, and which had been cut so accurately that when they were put together, they fitted so exactly you could not push a paper between them and no cement was needed.

Yet the Incas had neither rollers nor wheels for transport, they had not discovered the wheel; they had no horses or oxen either. They had no iron to cut the stones; the tools and weapons they had were only obsidian, a glassy volcanic stone. It is still a mystery how they cut the big blocks of stone.

Their cities were bigger than any in Europe at that time, the wide paved streets were so clean there that, as a Spaniard said, your feet remained as clean as your hands. These cities had things no European city had at that time: pipes which brought fresh water from the mountains, underground sewers which took the dirt away. They had public hospitals and public baths with hot-water systems. And the people of the cities never locked their doors, for thieves or robbers did not exist among them.

All the land and all food grown on the land belonged to the King; the King's officers went round and distributed the food according to the needs of every family. There was no buying and no selling, and no one had ever to go hungry.

The King was regarded as a kind of god on earth — he was called the son of the sun-god. The sun was the highest god of the Incas, and the walls of the great temple of the sun were lined with gold an inch thick. The temple of the moon was lined with silver.

It was a high civilization, but it also had its dark side. At great festivals the priests made human sacrifices to gods; men and

women were killed on the altars in honour of the gods. But the men and women chosen to be sacrificed never resisted: their life belonged to the King, the god on earth, and if his priests wanted that life they could take it.

And now this great and powerful King was invited by Francis Pizarro, the former swineherd, for a friendly visit. This visit was to be the end of the mighty kingdom of the Incas.

32. The Fall of the Incas

Pizarro had less than two hundred men while the King of the Incas had an army of thirty thousand men. Moreover the King of the Incas had a personal bodyguard of two thousand. And so it did not even occur to him that this handful of white men would dare to do anything against him.

The name of the Inca king was Athualpa. He was curious to meet these strange white men on whose faces hair grew (the Incas had no beards) and who dressed in strange hard metal and rode on monstrous animals. He was curious and did not fear any harm from this little band. And so Athualpa came the next day, carried in a litter by the highest noblemen, covered with plumes, golden ornaments and jewels. Behind the litter of the king came thousands of his warriors with their obsidian spears.

Pizarro sent an interpreter and a monk to meet King Athualpa. The monk approached the King and made a long speech in which he explained the Christian religion, and he ended by telling the King he should become a Christian.

King Athualpa listened politely but he could not make head nor tail of what he heard about the Old Testament and the New Testament; he could not make out what this man wanted of him, and so he shook his head. This made the monk very angry. He held up a book, the Bible, and shouted, "It's all written in this book!"

King Athualpa had never seen a book before for the Incas had no writing, and he took the book in his hand and looked at it.

"It tells you all," yelled the monk.

Athualpa put the book to his ear, and then said: "No, it does not tell me anything," and he dropped it to the ground.

"Cursed heathen," shouted the monk, "is that how you treat the holy word of God?"

At that moment Pizarro, who had kept in the background, gave a sign and with a crack of thunder both cannons fired into the mass of Inca warriors. Hundreds of Incas were struck down and at the same moment the Conquistadors rode with swords drawn into the Incas and cut them down.

The Incas were completely taken by surprise. King Athualpa was torn from his litter and taken prisoner. In half an hour his noblemen and four thousand of his warriors were killed, their obsidian weapons were useless against iron swords, and all the thousands of warriors were in such terror that they fled. They had seen thunder and lightning; they had seen their king, their god, roughly handled; it was like the end of the world for them.

King Athualpa was in a daze. Who were these people who commanded thunder and lightning and who had put his whole army to flight? And now he feared for his life. He was willing to do anything the strangers wanted if they would only let him go.

To his surprise, he was told that what they wanted was gold. For the Incas gold was not very valuable; they used it for decorating and ornaments, it was a beautiful metal, but not anything special. When Athualpa saw the strangers were greedy for gold, he said to Pizarro: "If you spare my life and set me free, I will fill this room where I am kept prisoner with gold as high as my arms reach."

Pizarro could hardly believe his ears. He promised to let Athualpa go as soon as the gold had been delivered. A messenger was sent to the Incas telling them what their King wanted, and for days they came laden with golden ornaments, cups, plates and statues which they took off the temple walls and from their wives.

The Spaniards thought they were in a dream when they saw the room getting filled higher and higher with the precious metal. As it would have been difficult to divide the thousands of different golden objects fairly between them, the Incas had to melt all the things down and mould them into gold-bars of the same size. And so many beautiful works of art were destroyed.

At long last the gold was all there, the room stacked arms-high with gold-bars. And when it was done Pizarro gave orders

to kill Athualpa. The luckless King of the Incas was strangled in the market-place before the eyes of his people.

And the Incas without their King were like a beehive without a queen — they did not know what to do, they were completely lost. The people who had killed the god-like king must themselves be gods. They looked at them with fear and awe and obeyed them blindly.

And so the former swineherd had become rich beyond his dreams. By treachery and surprise he had destroyed a great kingdom and become governor of the richest American colony, for that had been the promise of the King of Spain. But the time came when Pizarro had to pay for his deeds.

First there came trouble between Pizarro and his partner, Almagro. Almagro was not satisfied with his share of the plunder and some Conquistadors sided with him. It came to a terrible battle between the Spaniards which Almagro lost. Pizarro, as Governor, condemned him to death and Almagro was hanged.

But Almagro had a son Diego, who escaped and some friends kept him hidden from Pizarro's spies. Soon more and more of the Spaniards came to Diego to plot against the Governor Pizarro because he was as cruel to the Conquistadors who had fought for him as he was to the Incas.

One day eighteen men, all sworn enemies of Pizarro stormed into his house shouting: "Death to the tyrant!"

Pizarro had some of his officers with him. They drew their swords and fought back, but one by one fell. Pizarro held out longer than the others until he was breathless and exhausted and a sword pierced his breast. So he died as he had lived, by the sword and without fear.

Another Conquistador, Cortez, also with a handful of men, conquered the kingdom of the Aztecs in Mexico. It too was a story of murder and treachery, courage, and of a vast treasure of gold. The gold of the Conquistadors, of Pizarro, Cortez and others, went by ship-load to Spain and made Spain the richest nation in Europe.

Columbus had died in utter poverty but his discovery made Spain richer and more powerful than any other country.

33. Magellan

The story of Conquistadors like Pizarro is certainly not one in which Europeans can take any pride; the Incas were in many ways more civilized than the Conquistadors, and all that the Spaniards did was to destroy this marvellous civilization and turn the Incas into miserable and half-starved slaves. But how was it possible that such a great nation as the Incas with a great army of thirty thousand could be shattered and enslaved by a mere handful of two hundred?

It was not the weapons which gave the Spaniards victory — the two clumsy cannons took hours to be loaded. It was not the swords, for one man with the best sword could not really win against hundreds of enemies even if they had no arms at all. What gave the Spaniards victory was the difference between the mind of the Incas and the European mind.

The Incas lived in a highly-regulated society where their leaders told them what to do and when to do it. The leaders distributed the food and all necessities of life for everyone. No Inca had ever to think for himself; all decisions were made for them by a handful of priests and the King. Once the King was taken prisoner the Incas were as lost as sheep without a shepherd. The warriors would not fight without orders from the King, and once the King had been killed, there was in their mind nothing to fight for, and they accepted the murderers of the King as their new masters.

The Spaniards were different. They were hard men, selfish, greedy, cruel but every one of them was used to fending for himself, to fight for himself and to make his own decisions. It was this which helped make two hundred adventurers masters of a kingdom of many millions of Incas.

Of course, this independence also has another side: it makes people selfish and quarrelsome — it did not take long before the

Spaniards fought each other. For us today the challenge is to learn to be self-reliant and independent, but use our independence *for* each other and not against each other.

The Spanish Conquistadors, despite all their faults, their greed for gold and their cruelty, were brave and independent. And although they made their expeditions for the sake of gold, they also brought back reports of what they had seen on their journeys. And so more and more became known of this new continent, America.

One band of Conquistadors, starting on the east coast of America marched further and further west. After incredible hardships they came upon another ocean. They were the first Europeans to see the great ocean that lies on the other side of America, the Pacific Ocean. The leader of this band of Conquistadors, Balboa, had little reward for his discovery. On his return he quarrelled with a Spanish governor and was hanged for rebellion. But his discovery of a great ocean west of America inspired one of the greatest navigators and sailors in history.

This great sea-captain, Magellan, was Portuguese, from the country of Prince Henry the Navigator. For many years Magellan had sailed on Portuguese ships round Africa to India for spices. The trade in spices was still very profitable for Portugal.

Now, when Magellan heard that there was a great ocean west of America he thought: "We Portuguese are still sailing east round Africa to get to India. But why should it not be possible to sail west, sail round America and over the newly discovered ocean, and so get to India?"

Columbus had thought he could reach India by sailing west, but he had come upon America. Magellan wanted to reach India by sailing west and going round America. The only difficulty was that so far no one knew where America ended, where there was a cape round which you could sail. But Magellan, who had sailed round the cape of Africa thought that America must have a similar cape.

Magellan first went with his idea to the King of Portugal, but what had happened to Columbus also happened to him. His

plans were met with a cold refusal. And so Magellan did what Columbus had done and left Portugal for Spain offering his plans to the King of Spain.

The Spanish King, Charles V, was shown a globe of the world which Magellan had had made and painted himself. He showed King Charles on the globe where, he thought, there was a cape in the south of America round which one could sail (of course he only assumed there was such a cape). And Magellan explained to King Charles V the advantage Spain would have with not only the gold of America but, the profitable spice-trade with India as well.

In the end the Spanish King agreed to give him ships for exploring a new sea-way to India. But, as it turned out, they were not very good ships because the King had no wish to risk much money on such an uncertain venture. Magellan was given five ships which were so old that another sea-captain said: "I would not dare to sail on them to the Canary Islands." Yet it was these leaky tubs which made the first European voyage round the world.

Magellan set out on August 10, 1519, leaving behind a young wife and a baby son. The most precious possession he carried with him was his self-made globe; in the difficult and hard days that lay ahead, Magellan would go and look at his globe and draw strength and courage from the sight.

The first part of the journey, the crossing of the Atlantic to America, was as bad as it could possibly be. The five caravels ran into heavy weather, gale followed gale, the ships were tossed about like nutshells and there were thunderstorms and pouring rain. Something which nearly frightened the sailors out of their wits was that little flames of light appeared at night on the masts and ropes, running up and down and then disappearing. These lights, called St Elmo's Fire, are caused by electricity in the air and are harmless, but the sailors of those times were in great fear of them.

When the five caravels reached the coast of Brazil they had a short rest after two months of storm-tossed seas. And then they sailed further and further south following the coast until they would find a cape where they could turn west into the great ocean west of America.

Only one ship had tried to sail south before, but when a few sailors had landed ashore to get fresh water, they had been captured by warlike natives who killed them, roasted them and ate them. Terrified, the remaining sailors had turned round and sailed back.

So Magellan and his caravels were now coming to a part of America, Patagonia of which little was known except tales of horror. It was also getting cold — it was getting towards winter in that part of the world and Magellan realized he could not sail on into snow-storms and howling winter gales. They would have to go ashore, spend the winter months on land and continue the voyage in spring.

34. Crossing the Pacific Ocean

The King of Spain had not been very generous with the ships he had given Magellan and as that money given to Magellan to pay his sailors was also not very much, the crew he had found for his ships were wild, unruly and unreliable; they were a mixture of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French sailors, there was even an Englishman.

When the winter storms came, Magellan found a safe harbour on the coast to anchor the ships. It was a bleak coast, grey rocks with little patches of grass here and there, and nothing that could be used for food. Magellan knew they would have to stay in the harbour for four to five months and as the only food was what they had on the ships, all men had to go on short rations to make their store last.

But the sailors had no wish to spend months in this desolate spot with gnawing hunger. The captain and the crew of a Spanish ship mutinied capturing a ship and breaking open the stores to feast on ship's biscuits and wine.

Magellan sent messengers to the mutinous captain with the order to come to Magellan. The messengers had swords hidden under their cloaks and when the captain refused, they drew their swords and killed him. After this the other mutineers surrendered. Magellan had shown that he was master of his fleet.

The crews had already been two months on this desolate shore where no sign of life could be seen, when a visitor appeared: a native. He gave the sailors quite a fright when he walked in on them for he was so tall that even the tallest of the Europeans reached only to this man's waist. But the giant native was quite friendly, as were the other men of his tribe who soon joined him. The tall men showed by signs their great surprise that people as small as these sailors could build such big ships.

But the sailors, too, were surprised when they invited their

visitors to a meal. Each of the men ate a whole large basketful of ship's biscuits, and when they found some rats in the basket, they ate the rats too, fur, tail and all. After which, each drank a whole bucketful of water.

Magellan gave one giant a little mirror as a present. He was so frightened at seeing his own face in the glass that he fell over backwards and knocked down four sailors who happened to stand behind him.

Fortunately for these giant natives they had no gold, and that is why they continued to live, though many died of diseases brought later by other Europeans.

At last after six months the weather improved and the little fleet went on its way further south. After a week's sailing they saw the coast broken by channels running westwards. Perhaps by sailing through these channels and picking their way between the rocks, they might come out on the other side of America.

Rain was pouring down, there was dense fog, and so Magellan sent one of his ships under a Spanish captain ahead of the others to explore if there was a safe passage between the rocks and islands. But the treacherous captain used the dense fog to turn round and sail back to Spain. When the ship did not return Magellan thought it had run against a rock, and he spent days looking for survivors. He did not know that this ship had deserted him.

No trace was found and now the remaining ships wound their way cautiously between rocks and reefs and steep cliffs. Once they saw at night the flame of a native camp-fire in the distance, so they called the land Tierra del Fuego, land of fire, which it is still called today.

What made navigation between rocks and cliffs even more difficult were storms which buffeted the ships all the time. But after five weeks they came out of the channels and onto a wide, calm, open sea. Their joy was great and they called this calm sea Pacific Ocean, the peaceful ocean. And the passage, the strait through which they had come is called the Strait of Magellan after the great navigator who first sailed through them.

But Magellan was soon to find out that the calm waters of the Pacific would bring worse suffering than the stormy seas

from which they had come. He set his ships a course north-west, in the hope they would soon come to an island where they could replenish their food which was getting dangerously low. He could not guess how big the Pacific Ocean really is. After they had left the Strait the ships sailed for fourteen weeks without seeing any sign of land at all. And the lack of food became desperate. The ship's biscuits that were left were only dust mixed with worms, the water they had left was yellow and foul. Things became so bad that the sailors cut leather from the mast covering which the sun had dried as hard as wood. These strips of leather had to hang in the sea for five days before they became a little softer. Then they roasted and ate them. For a rat men were willing to pay a gold coin, but there were not enough rats on the boats.

It is not surprising that diseases broke out, ninteen men died of them. Magellan sat in his cabin and looked at his precious globe: it was all that still gave him hope.

At last after three and a half months they came to an island. But there was an unpleasant surprise in store for them: a boatful of natives came who climbed aboard the caravels and immediately began to steal everything they could lay their hands on. So the sailors came for them with swords and drove them off. The natives jumped overboard and swam ashore, leaving their boat behind. In the boat Magellan's men found coconuts, fresh fruit, sugar-cane, fresh water. This natives' boat saved their lives.

But the hardest blow for the expedition came at the next group of islands to which they came, the islands which Magellan called Philippines, in honour of the son of the King of Spain. The chief of one of these islands received Magellan very well. He made a trade agreement with him and even became a Christian. But this friendly chief was at war with the chief of another island, and Magellan offered to help his friend.

He went with a party of his sailors in three rowing boats to the enemy island. The sailors were armed with muskets and Magellan expected these weapons would drive their enemies to flight. So, firing their guns they waded ashore from the boats, but these natives were not afraid. They came in their hundreds and Magellan gave orders to retreat to the boats. Magellan was

alfway to the boat when a native struck at him with a spear. Magellan turned round and fought the native, but a second man truck at Magellan's legs and wounded him. Magellan fell down ıto the shallow water and the next moment a howling mob of atives was upon him and killed him. The great navigator died efore he could complete the task he had set himself. It was now p to his captains to complete the voyage.

But their troubles were not over. The friendly king now ıme to the conclusion that the Christian god was not very ɔwerful. He turned against the sailors who had thought he was ıeir friend. Fighting followed — and, in the end, only a hun-red sailors and two ships escaped from the treacherous hilippines.

One of the two ships was caught by the Portuguese who did ɔt like Spaniards interfering with their spice-business. The en were taken prisoner and languished for years in Portuguese ·isons. Only four of them lived long enough to see freedom ain.

Finally only one caravel, the *Victoria* under Captain Del Cano ached Spain having completed the journey after three years. ıt of 265 men who had set out only eighteen returned. All the hers had lost their lives on the long journey. The *Victoria* ought back a valuable cargo of spices and her captain was :hly rewarded by the King of Spain.

But there was no reward for Magellan. His baby son had :d while he was away, and his wife died of a broken heart ıen she heard of his death.

But Magellan's name will never be forgotten. His little car-:l *Victoria* proved something which, before, had only been a :ory: that the earth is round. Magellan's little hand-painted ɔbe was true.

35. The Renaissance

The expeditions of the Conquistadors and Magellan's great voyage round the world are both signs of that new age that was coming. But while the people of Europe began to explore the new world in the west, the great and dangerous enemy of the Turks rose again in the East.

In the time of the Crusaders the Turks had never invaded Europe. There was one thing which kept the Turks out of Europe and that was Constantinople.

The great city, named after Constantine the Great, on the narrow strait between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was like a strong gate stopping the Turks from storming into Europe. Ever since the Crusades, the Turks had tried repeatedly to take Constantinople, but had failed.

While Constantinople was a Christian city its people did not belong to the same Church as those of Western Europe who belonged to the Church of Rome with the Pope as the highest authority. The people of Constantinople did not recognize the Pope as an authority at all; the Emperor of Constantinople was at the same time head of the Eastern Church. And because of this there was no great friendship between western Europe and Constantinople.

Around the time Columbus was born, about 1451, a Turkish Sultan, Mohmed, swore that he would not rest until the crescent moon of Muhammad would fly over Constantinople. He led a vast army of three hundred thousand Turks against the city and at the same time a Turkish fleet attacked from the sea. The Emperor of Constantinople who was called Constantine like the first Emperor, had only fifty thousand men to defend the city.

In despair he asked for help from the Christians in the West, sending messengers to the Pope in Rome begging for help: perhaps a new crusade could save Constantinople. But the Pope

was not interested in people who called themselves Christians without accepting him as head of their Church. People who did not look up to the Pope were called "heretics" and to be a heretic was worse than not being a Christian at all. So the Pope and the Christians of Europe simply ignored the desperate pleas for help that came from Constantinople.

When Constantine knew that he could not expect any help he called his people together and said: "It is the duty of every man to give his life in the defence of his family, his country, and his religion. You are now called upon to fight and give your life for all three." Then he added: "If I have ever hurt or offended anyone of you, I am asking his forgiveness so that we shall fight and die as friends."

Constantine could have saved his life and the life of his family, for the Turks offered to let him and his family go if he surrendered the city without fight. But he refused to save himself and leave his people to the fury of the Turks. They should at least have the chance to fight. And so for three weeks the Turks threw their whole might against Constantinople: their cannons smashed walls, houses and whole streets. But the people of Constantinople, the merchants, shopkeepers — men who had never carried arms — now fought with the courage of veteran soldiers. But they were too heavily outnumbered, and after three weeks the Turks broke through and poured into the city. They slaughtered men, women and children, they plundered and burnt houses, they killed the Emperor Constantine and sold his family as slaves. The crescent moon of Muhammad rose over the churches of Constantinople and they were turned into mosques which remain to this day.

But now that the gate to Europe had been broken, the Turks crossed the strait and could reach the Balkan Peninsula. Soon Greece was overrun and the people of Greece came under the rulership of the Turks for four hundred years. But the Turkish armies swept onwards — all the Balkan countries fell to them, then they stormed into Hungary, and in Hungary, too, towns and villages went up in flames, and their inhabitants were plundered and oppressed.

Only when the Turks came to Vienna, the capital of Austria, were they stopped. Vienna held out against the Turkish onslaught and so saved the other countries of Europe from the terrible invaders.

But the danger of Turkish invasion remained. As Europe had once been threatened by the Huns and later by the Mongols of Genghis Khan, so it was now under the threat of the Turks. So Europe paid a terrible price for having left Constantinople to its fate. Yet some good came from the Turkish invasion.

Before Constantinople was taken by the Turks a great number of people fled westwards, mainly to Italy. These refugees from Constantinople spoke the Greek language and they brought with them books which contained the knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome, a knowledge which western Europe had forgotten.

If this had happened three hundred years earlier, no one would have paid much attention to these Greeks from Constantinople and the knowledge they brought. But in this new age when people's minds were eager and curious the knowledge that came from Constantinople, the knowledge of ancient Greece, excited and stirred the Italians.

And there was another change. Everywhere in Italy there were still ruins of ancient Roman times: temples, statues, buildings. In earlier days no one had taken much notice of these ruins. If an Italian peasant unearthed a Roman statue with his plough he broke it up and used the marble to fill a hole in a wall. But now all this changed. People realized that these things from the past were treasures. Bishops, princes, rich merchants began to collect anything that could still be found. An old manuscript from Greek or Roman times, or a statue (even if it had no head) became valuable and sought-after.

People also studied the Greek myths — the stories of Hercules, of the Trojan War, of Odysseus. They enjoyed and loved these stories so much that there were bishops who knew more about the Greek gods than about the Bible. And at the same time the whole Italian nation, from princes to peasants became passionately interested in art, in painting, sculpture and architecture. In our time, thousands of people get excited about a pop or film star, but in Italy at that time the whole population

of a city would come to look at an artist's new painting or new statue.

This period when love for art and for beauty was reborn, first in Italy and then spreading to all countries of Europe, is called Renaissance (which means rebirth). The Renaissance came at the same time as the great voyages of discovery, and it brought great and wonderful artists such as Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo.

36. Leonardo: Childhood and Youth

The sixteenth century brought forth a blossoming of great men of genius. If a man had been born in 1500 and if he had lived to be a hundred, during his lifetime he could have met the great astronomers, Copernicus, Tycho de Brahe, Kepler and Galileo Galilei. He could have met Columbus, Magellan and the Conquistador, Pizarro. He could have met William Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth.

Of course this fortunate man would have had to travel about a great deal, and some of these great people he would only have encountered when he was a child and they were in their old age, while others were only in their youth when he was old. But he would have been able to meet a crowd of men of genius, a greater number than in any other century. And perhaps the greatest were the Italian artists of the Renaissance.

They were not just painters of pictures — they could do that superbly — but could make marble and bronze statues, they were architects who could design churches and palaces, they could compose music and write poetry, and they had a thorough knowledge of geometry and mathematics. They even made new discoveries in art. The Italian artists of the Renaissance, for instance, discovered perspective.

In earlier times the background behind the figures of a painting was very often gold. Before the Renaissance a painting of Mary and the Jesus Child had no landscape or houses or anything in the background; the figures were painted on a golden background. These earlier painters used gold behind the figures to show that Mary and the Child are something holy, they belong to a higher world, the world of the spirit.

If any of these early painters did paint a house or a landscape

it was without perspective. But the painters of the new age — the painters of the Renaissance — painted Mary and the Jesus Child in this world, in the world we all see with our eyes, and in perspective. They discovered that, for our eyes, parallel lines come together in a vanishing point. The rules of perspective were only discovered about five hundred years ago by the great artists of the Renaissance.

It was a great, wonderful period in history. One of the strangest and the most wonderful of these men of genius was the artist, Leonardo.

Leonardo was born in a little village near the famous Italian city of Florence. The little village near Florence was called Vinci: and so Leonardo became known as Leonardo da Vinci (from Vinci).

Leonardo's father, Piero da Vinci, was a rich lawyer and he wanted his son also to become a lawyer. But young Leonardo did not care to learn Latin (which was necessary for a lawyer). He preferred to spend his time in the hills around Vinci with a little book and a pencil, for he loved to make drawings of everything he saw: the waves and whirls of a brook, the fish darting in the water, the frogs in the reeds, a lizard sunning itself on a stone. All these he watched quietly for hours on end and made drawings of them in his book. It was in these early days when he was only thirteen to fourteen years old that Leonardo trained his eyes to observe accurately and he trained his hand on the skill of drawing what he saw.

But his father was, of course, not very pleased with the boy who spent his time drawing pictures of frogs and lizards instead of learning Latin grammar.

Now one day a man from the village came to Leonardo's father and said: "Look, Sir Piero, I have a nice round, flat and smooth piece of wood — a perfect circle — which would look well if I hung it up in front my house as a sort of shield with a nice picture on it. You, Sir Piero, often go to the city of Florence and know some good painters there. Would you be kind enough to take the piece of wood with you next time you go to Florence and ask one of the painters to paint a picture on it, something I shall really enjoy when I look at it. I don't mind if it costs a bit of money."

Piero da Vinci was quite willing to oblige the man, and when he left Leonardo's father put the round piece of wood in a corner to take with him the next time he went to Florence.

Well, young Leonardo with his sharp eyes soon discovered this wooden shield-like thing with its smooth surface and he thought: "This is just made to paint on."

He took the piece of wood up into his room — and he spent a few hours making it even smoother until it became as smooth as glass. Now it was ready to paint on it. Now what should he paint? Leonardo took out his sketch book. There were drawings of fish and frogs and lizards and snakes. Which should it be? And then Leonardo had a bright idea: he was going to paint something that was a mixture of frog and lizard and snake — he was going to paint a dragon!

And fired with this great idea, he set to work. For many hours he painted and painted. He copied the bulging eyes of the frog, the head of the lizard, the scales of the fish and the long curving and twisting body of a snake. When, at last, he put his brush down, a perfectly frightful monster glared at him from the shield.

Now this was going to be a surprise for his father. Leonardo drew the heavy curtains on the windows so that the room was in pitch-darkness. Only a slit between the curtains was left so that light fell on the painted monster; everything else was in darkness. And when he had arranged everything to his satisfaction, he cried out with a piercing voice: "Father, father, come up quickly!"

Piero da Vinci came rushing upstairs, wondering if his son had hurt himself. He burst into the room and had the shock of his life when he saw in the gloom a hideous dragon staring at him balefully.

For a moment he gasped, but then he heard his son chuckling in the dark room and he realized what young Leonardo had been up to. He said: "It will cost me money to pay the man for his wood which you have wasted. He isn't going to hang this in front of his house. But if you, my boy, can do this sort of thing then, you will probably make a better painter than a lawyer."

The next day the father went to Florence and showed the

dragon-picture to a famous painter called Verrochio, who said immediately: "If your boy could do such a painting, he is, indeed, a born painter and I shall be glad to have him as a pupil."

And so Leonardo came to Florence as apprentice to this famous painter. But he did not start immediately with lessons in drawing or painting. As you could not buy paint in those days, every painter had to make his own paint, and it was the job of the pupils to do this. The apprentices had to make charcoal that was needed for drawing outlines, they had to prepare the canvas for oil-paintings. For two years Leonardo did only these jobs. Then he had to learn geometry and perspective. And when he had learned these things thoroughly he was still not allowed to do his own paintings. He was only allowed to paint a little part of one of his master's paintings — he might paint part of the blue sky in a picture, or a cloud, or the grass. It was a long time of study and learning for Leonardo.

37. Leonardo in Florence and Milan

It took years before Leonardo, as an apprentice painter, was allowed to paint a little unimportant part of one of his master's paintings. But one day Verrochio, the master, said: "We shall now make a start with figure-painting. I have finished this picture here, a picture of saints and angels, except for one angel here which you can paint, Leonardo."

So, for several days Leonardo worked on that one angel in the picture. When he had finished, Verrochio came and looked at Leonardo's work for a long time. Then he turned to the young man and said: "Your work is better than mine, Leonardo. There is nothing I can teach you any longer. You are a master."

And so Leonardo left Verrochio and set up as a master-painter on his own. Now a painter could only make a living if people ordered a painting from him, if they gave him a commission.

Now the people of Florence loved art, and a good painter could always be certain to get commissions in Florence. And because Leonardo was a great painter, a number of people came and gave him commissions. But soon people stopped going to Leonardo for pictures, for he would say, "Yes," and would even start the picture, but then he stopped; he became interested in something else, and the picture was never finished.

Don't think that the people of Florence did not like Leonardo, they loved him. He was quite outstandingly good-looking; not only women but men said of him he was the most beautiful human being they had ever seen. He was also excellent company, telling amusing stories for hours on end, or on occasions amusing his friends with his great strength. He would take a horseshoe in his hands and bend it apart until it was a straight length of iron. Or he would tell his friends to drive a riderless

horse through the street in full gallop, then Leonardo would step in the horse's path and stop it with one tug on the reins. He played a dozen musical instruments to perfection, and he invented some new instruments as well. One was a wooden box shaped like a horse's head with strings drawn across.

So the people of Florence loved Leonardo and were proud to have such a gifted man in their city, but they did not give any work to him because it was quite pointless — he never finished it.

Why was this? It was not because he was lazy — far from it. He could be seen working in his house deep into the night. He even invented a special light for himself to work at night, for there was as yet no electric or gas-light. People had to work by the light of candles with flickering flames. To prevent the flickering he put a candle in a glass cylinder and the glass cylinder in a bowl filled with water. The cylinder kept the flame steady and the water in the bowl magnified the flame and made the light brighter, as bright as dozens of candles. So Leonardo at times worked all night by the light of his invention.

Leonardo was so keen on inventing new things that, at times, he lost interest in painting. Although he could paint better than anybody else — he was, in his heart, a scientist, an inventor rather than a painter.

For example, when he had climbed the hills around Vinci as a young boy he had noted sea-shells embedded in the rocks. Even as a boy he had wondered how sea-shells came to be in a place hundreds of miles from the sea. Now, as a grown-up man he thought of it again and he came to the conclusion that once upon a time, the hills of Vinci must have been covered by the sea. At that time no one gave a thought to such questions — it took three hundred years until modern scientists came to the answer Leonardo had found for himself.

At one time he became especially interested in the anatomy of the human body. He got hold of some corpses — it was not difficult as criminals were often hanged in those days. As there was no refrigeration the corpses must have smelt horribly, but Leonardo spent days studying these corpses, cutting them up and making drawings of the bones, muscles, hearts, blood vessels. His drawings are so exact and accurate they could still be used by a medical student today. Leonardo knew more about the human body than most doctors of his time. Another time he became interested in map-making and was, perhaps, the first man who made a contour map, which shows the height of the land. At other times, he would fill his notebooks with drawings of plants.

So Leonardo was very busy, working very hard. But with all these things to study and to draw he had no time to get on with the paintings he had promised to do. And that is why people in Florence no longer gave commissions to Leonardo.

After a time Leonardo found himself without money and with debts; he owed money to people and could not pay it back. But, fortunately, just then another Italian city invited him.

Francisco Sforza, the ruler of Milan, engaged Leonardo not as a painter, but as a music-master and to make decorations for festivals and performances on a stage. And Leonardo did this work very well, inventing all kinds of complicated machinery so that actors seemed to fly over the stage.

This ruler of Milan, Sforza, was so pleased with Leonardo that he gave him a great and important task: to make an enormous bronze statue of a rider on a prancing horse, in honour of Sforza's father. (It was just taken for granted that a painter was also a sculptor.)

Leonardo threw himself with heart and soul into this work. It was to be the largest bronze statue in the world. He first made countless drawings of horses, then he made a little clay model of horse and rider, and then he made a large clay model at the size the statue should really be.

When that large clay model was finished, the prancing horse was twenty feet high, and the whole population of Milan came to admire it. To make the whole thing in bronze, Leonardo wanted seventy tons of bronze. That was a lot. Even the very wealthy ruler of Milan was shaken by the cost, but in the end he agreed, and the foundries began to make the bronze for Leonardo's enormous statue.

Just then the French invaded Italy and in that war the bronze for Leonardo's statue was used for making cannons. But worse

was to happen: the French armies won, entering Milan, and Sforza, Leonardo's friend and patron, had to flee. When the French bowmen saw the great clay model Leonardo had made, they used it for target-practice and in a short time the clay crumbled and the whole thing became just a heap of dust.

So this was another great work of Leonardo's which was never finished.

38. The *Last Supper*

Some people are easily satisfied with their own work, they don't aim very high. They are quite happy if they can get away with poor work and little effort.

Leonardo looked upon such people with contempt; in all he did he set himself the highest standard. He would give endless time and unceasing effort to every task, whatever it was. But often people who did not have such high standards, simply could not understand why Leonardo always took such an endlessly long time to finish his work. They could not understand that Leonardo was not easily satisfied and that only the very highest achievement was ever good enough for him, as can be seen from the story of the famous painting of the *Last Supper.*

When Leonardo was still working on that great clay model of rider and horse, the monks of a monastery in Milan came to him and asked him to paint a very special picture for them.

On a wall of their refectory (their communal dining room) the monks wanted a picture of the last meal Jesus had with his disciples, the last meal before He was betrayed and taken to be crucified. At this last supper with his disciples, Jesus said: "One of you will betray me," meaning Judas Iscariot, who was also present, though Jesus did not say who was to betray him.

This is the moment Leonardo painted. Jesus had just said these words — and the disciples are shocked with horror that one of them could betray their master. Every one of the disciples in the picture shows his horror or his grief in a different way, only Judas sits grim and sullen and dark, knowing whom the Lord meant.

Even for a genius like Leonardo painting this moment was

an enormously difficult task. But he set about it with his usual thoroughness. First he wanted to find models for the faces of the disciples. For weeks and months he walked through the streets of Milan peering at people's faces. When, at long last, he saw a man whose face he could use for one of the disciples, Leonardo observed that man for hours until he could remember every feature of his face, and then he rushed home to make a quick sketch of the face he had seen.

But sometimes months and months passed in which he could not see a face that would be any use to him.

The face of Christ was, of course, a very great difficulty. Where could he find a face which could be used as a model for Jesus? But, after many months he saw a young Italian nobleman whose face had just the right balance between gentle kindness and sorrow, which Leonardo wanted.

But it was not only the finding of models for the faces which took such a long time. Sometimes Leonardo would come in the morning before the unfinished picture in the monastery, stand the whole day before it, deep in thought, and at the end of the day walk out, without having done a single brush-stroke.

You can imagine that the abbot of this monastery became frantic with impatience about the slow progress of this picture. He pleaded with Leonardo to work faster and to finish it. He became cross with Leonardo, but it made no difference — the great painter just took no notice of him.

At long last the picture was nearly finished; only one face was still missing — the face of Judas, the miserable traitor. And now Leonardo became interested in evil and ugly faces, he filled his notebooks with all kinds of horrible faces he had seen in the streets of Milan and he went to places where thieves and rogues came together and sketched their mean and brutal features. But none of them seemed just the right model for Judas.

But by then the abbot of the monastery lost patience. He screamed and shouted at Leonardo: "I have put up with all this slow work as long as you had the excuse of taking great trouble over the faces of Jesus and the disciples, but I am not going to wait and wait for the face of that scoundrel Judas. Finish the picture immediately!"

"Well," said Leonardo calmly, "if you are really in such a hurry, I can finish the picture in a couple of hours. I shall simply use your face for Judas Iscariot."

The answer shook the abbot. He was terrified at the idea that his monks and the whole of Milan would see him painted as Judas. And so he calmed down and let Leonardo finish the picture in his own time.

Leonardo's answer showed what he thought of people who did not take great trouble over their own work and therefore could not appreciate a person who did. They were no better than Judas Iscariot, for every kind of careless work is really a betrayal of the good work that is possible.

When, in the end, the picture was finished, people from all over Italy and other countries came to Milan to see it. They all praised it as the most wonderful painting ever created. But here again misfortune struck at Leonardo, and it was his own fault because he could not stop experimenting.

Unlike painting on canvas where one can use oil-paints, for painting on walls painters had always mixed their paint with milk. Leonardo wanted to try something new on the wall of this monastery. He used a special mixture of oil paint which did not work out well at all. Only a couple of years later, damp patches came out and spoiled the picture, then the brilliant colours became dull, and in more and more places the paint began to peel off. In the course of time the picture became only a shadow of what it had been.

Even worse was to happened: later other painters who were not Leonardos, were called in to "improve" the poor masterpiece, but they only made things worse.

In the Second World War a strange thing happened. A bomb fell near the monastery, and the whole building collapsed except for the one wall with Leonardo's *Last Supper.* Recently modern methods have been tried to wash away the overpainting of the other painters and to restore Leonardo's work.

But the *Last Supper* had made Leonardo so famous that the city of Florence called him back to paint a picture of a great battle on the walls of the Town Hall. A battle scene with hundreds of men and horses — that was a wonderful task for Leonardo.

You can imagine how he worked on every detail. And this time he had invented a quite special kind of paint; when you painted the picture the colours looked quite dull, but when the colours were heated they became wonderfully brilliant. Leonardo had tried it out on cardboard and it had worked out very well. And so he painted this battle-picture with tireless effort to show the Florentine people what he could do.

The galloping horses, the shining swords, the fighting men in this picture would be something that could never be surpassed. When the picture was finished the colours looked dull. Now charcoal-braziers were brought in and the glowing coals began to heat the painting. But a wall is not the same as cardboard, and as the heat rose the colours began to run down the picture; hastily the fire was extinguished, but it was too late. The whole painting was just a blur and smudges of paint. Leonardo turned and left. Once again his experiments had ruined work that had taken many, many months.

39. Inventions and the *Mona Lisa*

You may wonder how such a great man as Leonardo could ruin his first great paintings by experiments. But he was the one of the few people in his time who realized that we can only learn from experiments. There was no one else who shared his love and interest for experimenting, there were no scientists who knew anything about chemistry or physics, who could have given him good advice. He had to find out everything for himself, and he loved knowledge so much that he was willing to risk his wonderful paintings for the sake of an experiment.

Many people loved and admired Leonardo, yet he had no real friend, a friend with whom he could share his burning interest for knowledge. He was really a lonely man because he was far, far ahead of his time.

When Milan was taken by the French and the great clay-model of rider and horse was destroyed, Leonardo first went to Venice. At that time Venice was at war with the Turks. The Turks were storming into Europe after the fall of Constantinople and Turkish ships attacked the Venetian ships in the Mediterranean. And Leonardo turned his mind to inventing ways of defeating the Turks.

In his notebooks (which still exist today) we find ideas which have only been put into practice five hundred years later. He designed a one-man submarine to attack the Turkish ships under water, and a diving-suit, with a glass-fronted helmet and air-filled bladders from which tubes led to the helmet so that the diver could breath under water. He thought of using gloves with webbed fingers for swimming under water; these were used

hundreds of years later by the frogmen in the Second World War.

He had the idea that one could throw containers with sulphide of arsenic at the enemy. Sulphide of arsenic is a poison-gas, and was used for the first time in 1914 in the First World War. He also thought that one's own troops should be protected against the poison gas by a damp cloth bound over nose and mouth, which is the first idea of a kind of gas-mask. He designed an armoured car driven by pedals (of course the petrol engine was unknown at that time).

But having thought out all these modern weapons of war, Leonardo wrote in his notebook: "I will not make these things known for men are evil and might use them for killing."

He did not tell the Venetians or anybody else of his ideas but he kept them in his notebooks where he wrote everything in mirror-writing (so that it would be harder to read). And nobody bothered to look at these notebooks until the twentieth century when these kind of weapons already existed.

Leonardo left Venice and returned to Florence for the battle-picture which ended so sadly. But the battle-picture did not matter so much to Leonardo for, at that time, a new idea had got hold of him, the idea of building a flying machine.

He bought birds in the market and set them free to watch how they took off. He measured their wing-span compared with the body, he made drawing of birds in flight. And then he began to build all kinds of wings only to destroy them and start others.

He even thought of the possibility that the machine might fail in mid-air and designed a parachute to save the pilot. His drawing clearly shows the same principle as a modern parachute. One of his drawings is of a machine which we now call a helicopter. And the last of his drawings about flight is nothing else but a glider similar to those used today.

It is fairly certain that Leonardo not only drew the glider but built it. He disappeared from Florence for a few weeks and when he returned he never mentioned to anybody what he had done, and his later notebooks never mentioned flying machines again.

But in the countryside around Florence for centuries there was a legend that peasants had seen a strange enormous bird flying over the hills. So it seems Leonardo had tried out his glider, he was perhaps the first man to fly, but kept the secret to himself.

We can see why Leonardo was a lonely man. There was so much he knew but could not and would not share with others. People had only begun to make machines like the printing press, they did not yet have reliable clocks or watches. Yet here was a man who thought of helicopters, gliders and submarines.

The people then just could not follow his ideas — he was too far ahead of his time. They only appreciated Leonardo as a painter, but as a painter he upset and bewildered even his admirers.

Kings and princes begged Leonardo to paint their portraits, but he simply refused. Instead of painting these great, powerful people he chose to paint the portrait of the wife of an Italian merchant. She was not a person of any great importance, but because Leonardo painted her, her name is known today all over the world while the noble princes and great ladies of that time are forgotten. The portrait of Mona Lisa is the name of this lady and her portrait is the most famous portrait in the world.

This portrait is not large at all, but it took Leonardo six years to paint it. It became a portrait which shows not only the face of Mona Lisa but her soul.

By that time the people of Florence lost interest in Leonardo who was about sixty years old; his battle-picture had been a grandiose failure; if he painted a portrait it took him years and years; he spent most of his time drawing machinery which no one understood. The Florentines turned their backs on him. Then Leonardo suffered another great misfortune. He had a stroke and his right arm was paralysed and could no longer be used for painting or drawing. But this strange man had another rare gift, he was ambidextrous — he could use his left hand just as well as the right, so from now on he worked with his left hand.

Florence was no longer interested in him, but the King of France was a great admirer of Leonardo, and invited Leonardo

to spend the last eight years of his life in France in peace and without worries.

When people in these last years of his life praised Leonardo for all the work he had done, for the beauty he had created, he only shook his head and said: "I have achieved nothing." He died in 1519, the year in which Magellan set out on the first journey round the world.

But we today know that he was one of the greatest men who ever lived — an artist and a scientist, a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and a seeker for knowledge and truth.

40. Raphael and Michelangelo

Leonardo had none of the cruelty and greed for gold of the Conquistadors, but he was driven by a thirst for a different gold, the gold of wisdom and knowledge. A person who has one great aim in life and pursues it regardless of anything else is called "single-minded." Just as the Conquistadors were single-minded about gold, so Leonardo was single-minded about the gold of wisdom. He was a Conquistador for wisdom.

The other great artists of the Renaissance were not so much concerned with experiments and inventions, they were not concerned with wisdom, but with beauty in art, in painting, in sculpture.

One of these great artist who loved beauty more than wisdom was Raphael. One thing which Raphael could do with ease that other artists, like Leonardo, could do only by great effort, was the ability to create the most beautiful paintings without making hundreds of sketches beforehand. Raphael made only a few sketches, but the loveliest paintings seemed simply to flow from his brush.

And what he loved best was to paint pictures of Mary and the Jesus Child. He painted them again and again, and each picture was different from the others, and each picture was a masterpiece. One of them is called the *Sistine Madonna* (Sistine was the chapel for which he painted the picture). This picture showing Mary and her child in heaven above the clouds (and the blue sky is made up of countless blue angels) is the most famous picture of Mary and the Jesus Child.

We don't know how Mary and the Child really looked, but perhaps Raphael, in his imagination, somehow came nearer to the truth than any other painter. Many people have had this feeling before this picture and feelings can be true — even if one

cannot prove it. Raphael is a painter who wants to touch your heart, your feelings — and not your mind.

But Raphael, who could paint the most lovely pictures with ease, died young at the age of thirty-seven years. But he left behind hundreds of paintings, far more than Leonardo who was thirty years older when he died.

Raphael was, perhaps, one of the most fortunate artists who ever lived. He was handsome, charming, and everybody loved him; he was gentle, kind and made friends easily. The Pope, kings, princes and rich merchants gave him commissions, they gave him more work than he could ever cope with and paid him generously so that he had never the worries Leonardo had. His paintings gave pleasure to millions, they were so perfect. But this happy life was also a short one; he died at an age when other painters began to become famous. Perhaps he was given so much good fortune because it was meant to be a short life.

Quite different is the life of another great master, the painter and sculptor, Michelangelo. He, too, loved beauty, but the beauty of strength. Most of the figures he painted are not sweet and gentle like Raphael's, but figures of might and power.

Raphael loved to paint Mary and the Jesus Child, but Michelangelo made statues of Mary holding the dead body of Jesus in her lap. He depicted the sorrow, the tragedy of the mother who had to see her son crucified. Such pictures or statues of Mary and the dead Jesus, are called Pieta.

Michelangelo painted vast enormous pictures, of God creating the world and of God creating man. These pictures are painted on the ceiling of an enormous church, the Sistine Chapel in Rome. To paint these pictures on the ceiling, Michelangelo had to stand on scaffolding with his head turned upwards, and he had to do this for four years. He became so used to keeping his head this way that, when the work was finished he still kept his head turned up, and had to read letters by holding them above his head. It took a year before he could hold his head normal again.

If you look at the works of Raphael it is like walking in a lovely garden. If you look at the works of Michelangelo it is like seeing mighty mountains reaching into the sky. In the work of

Michelangelo everything is serious. But there was also little happiness in his own long life — he lived to well over eighty.

Michelangelo was not handsome like Leonardo and Raphael, nor was he gentle or charming. He did not make friends easily, he was ill-tempered and had fits of rage. He could work for months on a statue. And then if it was not as good as he wanted it, he would take a hammer and break it to pieces.

We see how different the three great artists of the Renaissance were. Leonardo, the seeker for truth, the great thinker; Raphael, gentle, sweet-tempered, whose paintings touch the feelings; and the fiery, quick-tempered Michelangelo.

In Italy at the time of the Renaissance, there were not only these three great masters, there were hundreds of artists, painters, sculptors, architects who were not quite so great but produced very beautiful work. How was it possible that so many artists could flourish at that time?

A few centuries earlier, in the time of the feudal system, the noble knights could fight, but could not read or write and still less did they care for art. The villains and serfs were worked far too hard and were too poor and ignorant to know anything about art. Only the monks in the churches and monasteries had some interest in art. The time of the feudal system did not give many opportunities to artists. If Leonardo or Raphael had been born three hundred years earlier they could only have been monks painting little pictures on the hand-written parchment books.

But in the Renaissance in Italy there were hundred thousands of people who loved art, who could afford to buy paintings and could give work to all these artists of the Renaissance. Who were these people who could employ so many artists and who had the money and the time and the love to enjoy art?

They were the "citizens," the city-people: merchants, business men, bankers, lawyers, doctors. They were not knights, they were not serfs — they were free citizens, and in the freedom of the cities there could grow the love of art which made all these great masterpieces possible.

In the feudal age there had been only three classes of people: unfree serfs, noble knights and priests. In the Renaissance there

was a new class of free citizens. They encouraged art and artists. The great artists themselves — Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo — came from this middle class. They were not noblemen or serfs or priests, but free citizens.

In Italy, the feudal system had slowly withered away. In place of the noblemen and lords the cities had grown rich and powerful. But this freedom of the cities also had its problems. Italy was not one country, but was split up into dominions of the great cities. Each city had its own government and its own army, or (like Venice), its own navy. And the cities were quite often at war with each other. When the French attacked Milan, neither Florence nor Venice took much notice. The city people were business people — they regarded another city as competitors, as business competitors. That is why there was so much trouble between them. But the free cities were the cradle of Renaissance art.

41. The Wars of the Roses

In the year 1453 Columbus was still a child of two years, Leonardo was a child of one year, and in that year the Turks stormed Constantinople and poured in the Balkan Peninsula, in the east of Europe.

In the west of Europe the terrible Hundred Years War between England and France came to an end. Joan of Arc had been burnt at the stake twenty years earlier without seeing the end of this war, but it did come to an end and the English had lost France. In 1453 England and France made peace.

In Italy the feudal system came to an end through the growth of rich and powerful city-states. In Italy at the time of the Renaissance each great city was a state and surrounding small towns and villages came under the rule of the big cities. The power of the big cities did away with the power of knights and lords; the feudal system withered away as the power of the cities grew.

In England things happened quite differently. England was very much a feudal state; it was the English knights and the English kings who had first tried to conquer Scotland and had failed, being defeated by King Bruce. It was again the English knights and the English kings who had tried to conquer France, and had been defeated by Joan of Arc. Both these wars could not have taken place without the consent of the knights, for the Magna Carta stated the King of England could not go to war without the consent of his knights and noblemen.

In England knights and noblemen were quite powerful — even the King had to ask their consent for taxes for going to war.

After a hundred years of war with France which England lost, one might think that the people of England would settle down to a time of peace. The ordinary people, the peasants and

merchants would certainly have wanted peace, but not the knights and the noble lords. But as they dare not attack either Scotland or France again they started a war among themselves, a terrible war with a beautiful name: the War of the Roses.

At that time when great artists in Italy created wonderful works of art, England was ravaged by battles between its own people its own great lords and their knights.

How did this war come about? The middle part of England is divided by the Pennines, a north-south mountain-range. West of the Pennines is Lancashire and east of the mountains is Yorkshire. Now the most powerful noble families in the whole of England were the lords of Lancashire and the lords of Yorkshire. The shield of Lancaster showed a red rose and York had a white rose.

The House of Lancaster had so much power that, during the Hundred Years War, one of them, Henry IV, simply deposed the ruling King of England (Richard II), and made himself King. From now on, through several generations the Kings of England were of the house of Lancaster.

And when the Hundred Years War came to an end, it was again a Henry, Henry VI, of the House of Lancaster who ruled. Henry VI, a king of the red rose of Lancaster, was unfortunately not quite normal, he was not in his right mind, and had terrible fits, rolling on the floor and foaming at the mouth. In those days at his father's death, the eldest son of a king became King no matter how unfit he was to rule. And so somebody had to be chosen to rule England in the name of the insane king. The man chosen was the Duke of York — the House of the White Rose — the next powerful house in England. The Duke of York was called "Protector," but practically, he *was* king and made all decisions. Of course, he gave all the high positions to his friends and to members of his own family.

Henry, although he was not very bright, did not like it at all that the Duke of York acted as if he were the real king. And Henry's wife, Queen Margaret, hated the Duke of York and did not want him to be in power. And there were other lords and noblemen who were jealous of the Duke of York and did not want to be ruled by him.

In the end, all the enemies of the Duke of York bandec together under the sign of the red rose to take his power from him. And all the lords and noblemen who were for the Duke o York gathered to fight for him with the white rose on thei shields and banners.

And so in 1455 — two years after the end of the Hundrec Years' War — the Wars of the Roses began, that lasted for thirty years.

In this war, the Duke of York was killed, but his son, Edward continued the struggle. Henry was taken prisoner and locked up in the Tower of London where he died. Queen Margaret askec Scotland and France, England's old enemies, to send armies tc fight for the red rose of Lancaster.

Sometimes Lancaster was winning, and then any noble whc had fought for York and got caught was executed. Sometime York had the upper hand and executed the supporters of the red rose.

There was one lord, the Earl of Warwick who first supported York, but when Edward of York had established himself as King, he turned against him and joined the Lancastrians. Warwick died in battle, but the war still went on.

There was not only bloodshed in battle, there was foul murder and treachery. When Edward, the York King died, his son was murdered by an uncle, who wanted the crown for himself. But the evil uncle did not enjoy the crown for long, he was defeated by Henry Tudor of Lancaster, a relative of mad Henry.

With Henry VII the red rose had won, and that was the end of the War of the Roses. To end the enmity between the two houses Henry Tudor married a princess of the house of York.

In these thirty years of war hundreds of knights and noblemen had died in battle or had been executed by one side or another, their castles and the land they owned had been confiscated by York Kings or Lancastrian Kings. When the war ended there were hardly any great and powerful lords left, and that was the end of the feudal system in England.

In Italy the feudal system had disappeared because the city-states had grown rich and powerful. In England the feudal system was destroyed by the War of the Roses. But in England not

the cities which had suffered badly in the war, but the King was the strongest power.

All over Europe, in one way or another, the feudal system, the power of lords was breaking up. This end of the feudal system belongs also to this time, the Age of Discovery and the age of the Renaissance.

42. Borgia and Savonarola

At the beginning of this new age many new things came into the world: new inventions like the printing-press, new discoveries like Columbus' and Magellan's voyages, and a new love for art was born — the Renaissance with Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and a new class of people became important, the merchant or middle-class.

But as all these new ideas rose and spread old customs and old institutions were swept away. The feudal system with the power and the privileges of the noblemen and lords slowly withered away.

For centuries the Church had enjoyed enormous powers and enormous privileges. In the Dark Ages when Germanic tribes destroyed Rome and its civilization, only the monks had any knowledge at all; they could read and write and made the beautiful illuminated manuscripts. All these monks were sworn to obedience, they would obey the head of the Church, the Pope in Rome, in all things. If the Pope had decreed that the earth was flat, then it was the duty of every monk and priest to believe that the earth was flat. And not only the monks but every peasant, knight, merchant or king had to believe it. And anybody who dared to think differently and to say so, was called a heretic. And a heretic was usually burnt at the stake. Remember Galileo who only saved himself by pretending he believed the sun goes round the earth.

But long before Galileo, there had been all kinds of heretics, people who dared to have their own ideas about Christ or about how one should worship God. As these ideas were not what the Pope wanted, these heretics had suffered persecution and death. In the opinion of the Church, only the Pope in Rome could know what everybody should think whether it was religion or

science, and to disagree with the Pope was a deadly sin, a crime to be punished by death.

But the Church not only power had over the minds. Over the centuries kings and lords and rich men had made great gifts of land, gold or treasure to the Church. They believed that if they gave gifts to the Church, they would be rewarded in heaven. And so over the centuries, the monasteries, the bishops, the Pope in Rome had become increasingly wealthy.

Some bishops had more land than the greatest lords, and the Pope in Rome had an immense wealth at his disposal. But all this wealth did not help to make good priests and there were many who thought more about good food, drink and comforts than about serving God. That is why Francis of Assisi had founded a new order of monks, sworn to poverty. Sworn to live without comfort. But, after his death even his own monks went back to an easier, more comfortable life.

And at the time of the Renaissance, the Church as a whole had become as rotten as never before. Specially the higher ranks — bishops, cardinals, and even the Pope, led lives that were a disgrace to the religion of Christ.

At the time of Leonardo da Vinci, a man became Pope who can only be called a monster of evil. His name was Borgia.

When he was still a bishop, Borgia was already known for wild drunken parties with his friends. Then the old Pope died and the cardinals had to elect one of themselves as the new Pope. Few of them would have considered voting for Borgia, but he promised great sums of money as bribes, and so he was elected Pope Alexander IV.

But then he wanted to get all that money back again. This was not really difficult, for when a bishop died it was up to the Pope to choose the new bishop. And there were men who were quite willing to pay large sums to the Pope for the privilege to become bishops. And so every time a bishop died, Alexander sold the vacancy to the highest bidder.

Unfortunately the bishops did not die quickly enough for the needs of Pope Alexander, and so he found a way to speed up things. He used to invite a bishop to a banquet with excellent food, good wine and music — it was splendid entertainment.

But the next day the guest did not feel very well, and a few days later he was dead, and Alexander had another vacancy to sell. But in the streets of Rome people whispered of a secret poison *aqua toffana* that was in the possession of the Holy Father. But one had to speak of such things in whispers — it was not healthy to speak openly. A young Roman nobleman, Orsini, spoke openly against the Pope. A short time later he was found stabbed to death in a dark street. And everybody in Rome knew that the Pope had a gang of paid murderers, ready to do his bidding.

But Alexander spent money like water, and needed more money. He thought of other ways of increasing his income. In those days people believed that the Pope could forgive sins on behalf of God. A man who had committed a theft or even murder would fear that God would punish him for his crimes, but if the Pope gave him a pardon, then God would also forgive him.

Such a pardon by the Pope was called an "indulgence." It was a paper on which was written that this was a pardon for a theft, or for a lie, or for murder. And Alexander had the bright idea of selling these indulgences — you paid so much for a lie, much more for a theft, and a still higher price for murder. Not only in Rome or in Italy, but all over Europe monks went about selling these indulgences and people bought them. It was a great business that brought money flowing into the treasury of the Pope. But not all people agreed with this disgraceful business.

In the city of Florence, a monk, Savonarola, spoke out against these evils. He preached against the luxury and wealth which had brought all this evil — and he called Alexander Borgia a devil in human shape. Savonarola was a wonderful preacher, he had the power to move the hearts of those who listened to him. The rich citizens of Florence felt ashamed of their own luxury: they made bonfires on which they burnt their fine clothes, they even burnt the lovely paintings with which they had decorated their walls; they dressed in dark simple garments, they gave up their fine food and lived on bread and olives. And they turned against the Pope Alexander IV.

At first Alexander tried to silence Savonarola through bribery, offering to make him a bishop. Savonarola scornfully

refused. The Pope found other ways to deal with the stubborn monk. There were many priests in Florence who were against Savonarola, and, at the Pope's command, they spread all kinds of lies about the courageous monk — that he was in league with evil powers. And, after a time, when the people of Florence began to miss their good food and their fine clothes. They were also willing to believe these lies. And once Savonarola no longer had the support of the people of Florence, he was doomed. He was taken prisoner by the Pope's men, condemned to death as a heretic and burnt at the stake.

But the justice of God which Alexander had mocked so long, caught up with the evil Pope. He had planned another poisoning of an elderly bishop. There was the usual banquet, and a cup with poisoned wine was ready. But this time the cup-bearer who served the wine to the guests had been bribed by the bishop who knew what was in store for him. And at the last moment the cup-bearer switched the cups, so Alexander drank his own poison and died a painful death.

When the people of Rome heard of his end they celebrated and danced and sang in the streets for five days. And at the funeral they spat at the coffin and shouted curses.

43. Martin Luther

The story of Pope Alexander Borgia shows that this wonderful time of the Renaissance, the time when Leonardo painted the Last Supper, when Raphael painted his lovely Madonnas, was also the time when the highest ranks of the Church were wicked, evil men.

Yet the authority of the Pope, the power of the Pope was still so great that a sincere priest, like Savonarola, paid with his life for speaking the truth. There were hundreds of thousands of people in all of Europe who felt like Savonarola and who looked with horror and shame at the sorry state of the Christian Church, but who felt powerless to change things.

It was as if all these sincere Christians were waiting for someone to have the courage and strength to challenge the evil powers who ruled the Church. And a man came who challenged and, in the end, defied the power of Pope, cardinals, bishops. He was a German by the name of Martin Luther.

Martin Luther was born in 1483, the same year as Raphael, and thirty years after Leonardo. He came from a poor family; his father was a miner who worked in a copper mine. But this poor miner wanted his son to have a good education. The parents made great sacrifices for their son and lived modestly to enable their son to study.

Young Martin was a clever boy and became a university student. Even then life was not easy for him. To earn some money, after his lessons Martin Luther, like many others, went through the streets from house to house singing and sometimes a door would open and a kind person would either give him a few coppers or a plate of food. Yet, young Martin worked hard at his studies and at the age of twenty-one he received his university degree.

And then something happened which changed his whole life. He went for a long walk in the countryside with a friend. They started out in brilliant sunshine but later in the day clouds came up and the two friends were caught in a terrific thunderstorm. They hurried to find a place of shelter when there was a blinding flash of lightning, a terrible clap of thunder, and Martin Luther's friend fell lifeless to the ground killed by lightning.

From that day onwards a great change came over Luther. He asked himself again and again, "Why was I spared? Why was my life not taken?" And he became more and more convinced that God had spared his life for a purpose, and he decided to become a monk. In the monastery he would have liked to devote all his time to prayer and to the study of the Bible, but the abbot wanted him also to preach sermons. Luther was afraid of giving a sermon, he was very modest and thought people would only laugh at him. But when he stood in the pulpit his fear of making a fool of himself disappeared; he spoke from his heart and all who heard him were deeply moved. In time Luther even became famous as a preacher.

And when the monastery had to send somebody to Rome, to the Pope, the monks thought they could not send a better man than Martin Luther.

Now when Luther came to Rome he was still a faithful son of the Church, for him Rome was a holy city and the Pope was the Holy Father. It was a great honour that he, the son of a miner, a simple monk, was going to meet this holy person, the Pope.

Alexander IV had already died, but his successor, Leo X, was not a very holy man either. His main ambition was to become famous for building the largest and most beautiful church in the world, St Peter's in Rome (where both Raphael and Michelangelo painted for him). But all this cost money and Pope Leo was as ruthless as Alexander when it came to getting money.

In Rome Martin Luther saw priests, bishops, cardinals who used their position only to enrich themselves, he saw a Pope who sold high positions in the Church to anyone who paid well enough, and all this was a bitter disappointment. But Luther

was, after all, a monk. He had sworn an oath of obedience, and so it still did not occur to him to say anything against the Pope. He returned to his monastery in Germany and kept his sorrow and disappointment to himself.

The new Pope in Rome needed vast sums of money to fulfil his ambition of building the most splendid church in the world. Alexander had found one excellent way of getting money by selling indulgences, selling people forgiveness for their sins. This shameful trade had stopped at the death of Alexander Borgia. But now the new Pope, Leo X, needed money to pay his architects and painters, and so he sent his "travelling salesmen" into every country of Europe to sell indulgences. There were priests, monks, selling forgiveness for any crime or sin.

The priest-salesman sent to Germany was called Tetzel. He was an excellent businessman. Tetzel usually set up a little stall in the market-place of a town. He then made a speech, and as he spoke well, more and more people came to listen to him. Tetzel told them what a terrible thing it was to offend God by laziness, by telling lies, by using bad language, and what a terrible punishment God would inflict on all sinners. He had his listeners thoroughly frightened (after all few people in the world can be certain they have never done anything wrong) and when they were well and truly scared, Tetzel said: "But, my dear friends, you need not fear God's wrath and punishment if you come and buy one of these papers here; each of these wonderful papers is an indulgence by the Holy Father in Rome and, whatever you have done is forgiven by God as soon as you have paid me for the indulgence." And people queued up to pay.

On one occasion this clever salesman Tetzel was caught in his own trap. A knight came to him and said he wanted to buy an indulgence for a robbery. That was quite an expensive sin, and Tetzel was pleased to get a lot of money from this knight. The next day Tetzel made still more money and when he left this particular town to start business somewhere else again, he carried with him a well-filled cash box. He was riding on a lonely road when, suddenly, armed men appeared, knocked him down and took his cash box.

"You sinners," cried Tetzel, "God will punish you for robbing a priest, the messenger of His Holiness, the Pope!"

"No, he won't," said the leader of the gang, and he drew from his pocket the indulgence paper he had bought the day before from Tetzel.

Still this misfortune did not stop Tetzel and many other priests sent from Rome. They went from town to town, village to village, selling indulgences and earning money for the Pope and his ambitions.

Now Martin Luther had kept silent about his disappointment, about all the wickedness he had seen in Rome. But when these indulgences were sold like pills for headaches in every market square of Germany, he could not remain silent. He could not stand by and see people cheated in the name of God and the Christian Church.

He preached openly against this shameful trade. He wrote down 95 reasons why these indulgences were against anything in the Bible and he nailed these 95 reasons to the door of his Church in Wittenberg so that people could read them. And people came and copied these reasons, and the copies were passed on — they were spread all over Germany. And once people had read Luther's arguments against the indulgences the whole trade in these papers came to a stop.

The Pope in Rome was, of course, furious, and so the struggle between the power of the Pope and Martin Luther began.

44. Luther and the Reformation

If it had not been for the stroke of lightning which killed his friend but left Luther unharmed, he might not have become a monk. He might perhaps have been a lawyer and even as a lawyer he would have been against the shameful trade in indulgences, though people would hardly have paid much attention to his opinions. But Luther spoke against the indulgences as a priest, a famous preacher, as a monk who had been in Rome and had seen the Pope. If such a man as Luther called the selling of indulgences a cheat and a swindle, then he must be right, and one could not simply "buy" God's forgiveness by paying for a piece of paper. Luther's words had such a great effect *because* he was a priest. So the stroke of lightning which made Luther become a monk was of great importance. Without it, none of the things which now happened might have come to pass.

Now, copies of Luther's arguments against indulgences spread all over Germany, and because they were the words of a greatly respected priest, people in Germany simply stopped buying these bits of paper, and the Pope lost a very large part of the money he had expected.

Pope Leo X was very angry and he sent a letter to Martin Luther commanding him to immediately come to Rome. But Luther, remembering what had happened to Savonarola, was not going to Italy at all.

And by now he was not just a lonely monk who stood against the Pope on his own. Thousands of people in Germany who had been very unhappy about the greed and the wickedness of the Popes in Rome, had only waited for someone to take the lead. Luther was the right man and they all supported him.

What all these people wanted was a complete change in the whole Church. The old form of the Church with the Pope as head and highest authority should go — the whole Church should be re-shaped, re-formed. As a little snowball rolling downhill becomes a great avalanche, so the argument between Luther and the Pope grew into a large movement of hearts and souls which was called Reformation.

Having so many supporters, Luther not only refused to go to Rome but he wrote a little book in which he said that there was nothing in the Bible to show that anybody owed obedience to the Pope, and that the Pope was a servant of the devil, not of God.

The town where Luther lived was called Wittenberg. And the Pope's answer to Luther's little book was that he sent a message to the town of Wittenberg. The message said: Martin Luther is a heretic. He is therefore no longer a priest. He is not even a Christian and so should not be allowed to enter a church or take part in any service. And no good Christian should have anything to do with him.

In earlier times such a command by the Pope would have meant the end of Luther. But by now there was a different spirit. The whole town of Wittenberg sided with of Luther.

Luther called the citizens of Wittenberg together and spoke to them, and he spoke with a power that moved people deeply. He declared that he did not even want to remain a priest in a Church ruled by such a wicked person as the Pope in Rome. From now on he was the minister of a new Church, a Church which owed no obedience to the Pope, and which had no master but God. The people cheered and made a big bonfire, onto which they threw the Pope's letter and a good many other books which had been written against Martin Luther.

This bonfire in the German town of Wittenberg was an important event in history, for it was the beginning of the Reformation, the beginning of the great rebellion against the Pope from which came later all the other churches and communities which do not recognize the Pope's authority. This bonfire was kindled in the year 1520, one year after Leonardo's death, less than thirty years after the discovery of America.

Pope Leo X had failed to crush this dangerous rebel, Martin Luther. But he was not going to let Luther get away with it. The Pope now turned to the ruler of Germany and asked him to deal with Luther.

This ruler of Germany, Charles V, was a very remarkable person. He was the most powerful man of his time, and it was quite true what people said of him: that in his dominions the sun never set.

His father, Maximilian, had been Emperor of Germany and Austria; Belgium and Holland were also part of his empire. So Charles V's father was already very powerful. And then Charles married the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain who had no other children. So through this marriage, after Ferdinand's death, Charles also became King of Spain. It was he Charles V, who gave Magellan the ships to sail round the world. Apart from all the European countries which Charles ruled — Germany, Austria, Spain, Belgium, Holland — he was also the ruler of the rich Spanish colonies in America, as well as colonies in the East Indies.

So it is quite true that the sun never set on the empire of Charles V — for when the sun sets in Austria, it rises in Peru, and when setting in Peru it rises in the East Indies.

This mighty ruler, the Emperor Charles V, was asked by the Pope to deal with that rebellious German monk, Martin Luther. The Emperor was a fair-minded person and he did not want to do anything against Luther without giving him a chance to defend himself. There was also another reason to be careful. Charles V knew that a great many people in Germany — powerful lords and great cities, learned men and simple peasants, generals and common soldiers — were all in sympathy with Luther. And Charles V was too clever a man to stir up trouble if he could help it. Luther should have a fair chance to speak for himself.

And so Charles V called a great meeting of princes and noblemen, of cardinals and bishops — of all the great and powerful men of Germany. And Luther was also summoned to appear before this gathering and to defend himself. He was promised a "safe conduct," that means whatever was decided at

this meeting, Luther would be allowed to return to his loyal town of Wittenberg.

So this monk, the son of a miner, was to come before the most powerful people of his time, including the mighty Emperor, Charles V.

45. The Diet of Worms

Emperor Charles V's assembly of great lords and noblemen wa called a "diet." And the city where this diet was to meet was great German city called Worms. So this important assembly i called the Diet of Worms, which sounds funny but it was no funny for Martin Luther

There are many kinds of courage: the courage of a soldier going into battle, the courage of a missionary going among wild people, or the courage to own up if one has done something wrong. And it needed a special kind of courage to walk, like Luther, alone into a great assembly and to defend himself before the high and mighty lords of Germany and the great Emperor.

When Luther approached the doors of the great assembly hall, one of the soldiers on guard patted Luther on the shoulder and said: "I've gone into many a battle without fear, but I would not like to be in your shoes, little monk." Then the doors opened and Luther entered the great hall. At the back of the hall on a high throne the Emperor, Charles V, sat. To one side of the throne stood a Roman cardinal in his crimson robe; the Pope's envoy. And all around, five thousand people thronged the great hall, lords and knights in their colourful clothes, lawyers and learned men dressed in black, bishops, priests and monks. When Luther walked in, this great crowd fell silent and all eyes were turned to this monk, in his dark-brown habit.

Luther walked through the crowd until he faced the Roman Cardinal. And now, while all these thousands listened, the questioning began.

The Roman Cardinal, the Pope's ambassador, fired questions at Luther; questions which were meant to trip him up or

to show his ignorance. And these questions went on and on. Except for short breaks at mealtimes, the questioning lasted all day, and the next day. And all this long argument was intended to make Luther admit that he was wrong and that the Pope was right.

But at the end of it all, when the Cardinal had no more questions, Luther said words which have become famous in history: "I will not take back anything have said for this would be against my conscience. I stand by my words, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God. Amen."

The Emperor Charles V had promised Luther a safe conduct, and so when Luther had said these words with a ringing voice, he was allowed to leave the assembly and to set out on his journey back to Wittenberg. Luther was still on his way when Charles V made it known that, after having listened to that long discussion, he had come to a decision. The decision was that Luther was in the wrong, that Luther was a heretic and that he was an outlaw. If a man was declared an outlaw, it meant that he was no longer protected by any law, and that he could be killed by anyone without fear of punishment.

Now Luther was an outlaw and his life was no longer safe. But he had friends in Germany, people who were on his side, and they helped him to go into hiding. Luther found shelter and hiding in a castle called Wartburg where he was safe from his enemies.

While Luther was in hiding in this castle, he began a great task: the translation of the Bible into German. Up to that time, the Bible was only for educated people who knew Latin, the Church did not want anyone able to read the Bible. There was no Bible in German or English or French, there were only some stories from the Bible which people could hear from the priests. Some men who had tried to translate the Bible into their own language had risked their life doing so, because the Church did not want ordinary people to read the Bible for themselves.

But Luther, as a German, wanted all his people, not only those who knew Latin, to be able to read the Bible. So he used the time he was hidden in the Wartburg to make a translation.

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The Wartburg castle where
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After a year Luther could lea
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So Luther returned to Wittenberg w
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Luther took one more step away from th
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27. The Age

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27. The Age of Discovery

A new spirit was abroad in Europe, a spirit of curiosity; there was a new eagerness to find out things, to discover the unknown. The next great step in discovering the unknown was made in the Iberian Peninsula, the lands south of the Pyrenees, in Portugal and Spain. It happened while England and France were still locked in the Hundred Years' War.

When the Arab power was at its height, it was like a crescent moon stretching from the Pyrenees across North Africa to the Holy Land. But by the year 1400, the Arabs had lost much ground in the Iberian peninsula, only the south was still held by the Arabs or "Moors," while in the North there was a Christian kingdom, the Kingdom of Spain. And in the West there was another Christian kingdom, Portugal.

And it is in Portugal that a wonderful period of history started which is called the Age of Discovery in the history books. It was one man who started the Age of Discovery. He was Prince Henry, the third son of the King of Portugal. His mother was an English princess, and perhaps he inherited his life-long love for the sea from her.

Prince Henry was also a Knight Templar. The Knight Templars, the noblest, bravest of the crusader knights, possessed great wealth which they used not for themselves but to start new enterprises — mines for metal-ore, for instance. The greed of the King of France and of Pope Innocent destroyed the Knight Templars almost everywhere. However, in Portugal the Knight Templars survived and changed their name to the Order of Christ. And Prince Henry was the Grand Master, leader, of this Order of Christ. And as Grand Master Prince Henry continued the task of the Knight Templars. This task was to strengthen Christianity, to weaken the power of the Arabs and Turks, and — even more important — to open men's minds to the wisdom of the world.

One way of doing this was fighting against the Moors — and Prince Henry did that; already as a young man he became famous for his part in a great land and sea battle in which the Portuguese took the port of Ceuta — opposite Gibraltar — from the Moors.

But Prince Henry was not only a hero of actions, he was a man of thought, of new ideas. The trade in spices had the merchants of Venice buying the spices from the Turks. But the spices came from much further east, they came from islands in the Far East. The Turks brought the spices from India and became rich selling them to Venice. But if the ships of Portugal could reach India, it would finish the Turkish profits, and would make Portugal rich.

But how could the ships of Portugal get to far away India? Today it is easy to say: sail round Africa. But at the time of Prince Henry nobody from Europe had ever sailed round Africa, no one knew even that one could sail round, no one knew how big or how small Africa was.* There was no knowledge, but there were strange tales.

If you look at the map you see a great bulge on the west coast of Africa. Such a bulge is called a cape. This cape was only known from hearsay — no European had seen it — but it was called Cape No because, it was said, one can sail no further. The Sun, they said, is so hot there that all the water of the ocean boils away and ships get stuck in the salt. The sun is so hot, they said, that if a white man gets there, his skin is burnt black for the rest of his life. Even the bravest sailors were scared at the mere thought of sailing in this direction.

Prince Henry wanted the ships of Portugal to sail along the African coast and to find a way to India, but there was no map and nothing was known of the way. And even if one ship by sheer luck found a way, what good was that unless the captain of the ship could make a good, reliable map which others could then follow.

*In 1413 the Chinese had not only sailed around Africa, but probably also to North and South America, circumnavigating the world. When the voyages returned to China, a change of Emperor brought isolation to China. It is probable that copies of some Chinese charts reached Portugal where they were closely guarded.

So Prince Henry set up a school of navigation, the first school of this kind in the world. In this school experienced captains from many nations, map-makers, even Arab sailors and scientists instructed the Portuguese seamen how to use the instruments which show the latitude of a place, how to use a compass and how to observe sun and stars with instruments, astrolabes, and how to make maps.

Only when they had learned all this did the Portuguese ships set out. But they did not go straightaway round Africa. The first ships went only a short distance, then they came back and reported what they had seen. The next ships went a bit further and again came back with reports. And from these reports maps were made to guide other ships.

Prince Henry received all these reports and saw to it that proper maps were made, but he stayed behind and supervised all this work. The Portuguese people laughed about him, calling him, "Prince Henry, the Navigator who never goes to sea." But later on they very respectfully called him only "Prince Henry the Navigator."

One of the earliest ships Prince Henry sent out ran into a storm and was blown westwards. They lost sight of all land and thought they would die of hunger and thirst, but then they saw an island, which they named Porto Santo. It was one of the islands now called the Canary Islands. There were no people on it but the climate was very pleasant.

The ships safely came back to Portugal and Prince Henry sent Portuguese peasants to settle on these beautiful islands. They took seeds with them and soon their crop flourished. Unfortunately, the colonists also took rabbits with them. As there were no wild animals on the islands the rabbits multiplied and ate all the crops. The colonists had to leave. Soon another island further west was discovered, a large island which was called Madeira, meaning "wooded island."

But these discoveries in the west were not Prince Henry's goal; he wanted a way south, and his ships *did* go further and further south. And from these longer and longer journeys along the coast of West Africa, they began to bring back things of wonder. They brought back ivory which they had bought from the

natives for a few glass beads; and, even more exciting was gold-dust. Soon people not only in Portugal but all over Europe talked about strange far-away lands where the rivers ran with gold.

And if it was not gold and not ivory, it was something else. The Portuguese sailors, seeing the African natives, took it for granted that these black men were enemies of the Christian faith. They attacked peaceful tribes on the coast, took prisoners and brought them home to be used as slaves. So began one of the most shameful chapters in the history of the white man — the trade in black slaves.

The ships went still further south, and further, some went up rivers into the interior of Africa. Every month brought new knowledge, new discoveries. But in 1460 Prince Henry suddenly fell ill and died; he did not live to see his dreams come true.

But the enthusiasm, the spirit of discovery which he had roused in the Portuguese sailors lived on. They reached the southernmost tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope. They sailed round the Cape, and, 38 years after Prince Henry's death, the Portuguese captain Vasco da Gama reached India.

Within a few years the people of Europe began to buy their spices from Portugal; the Turks lost their trade, and the power and wealth of Venice also declined.

But something much more important had happened. Prince Henry the Navigator, had shown the world that ships could sail into unknown seas — and so had turned men's minds to the High Seas and the unknown lands beyond. The Navigator who never went to sea had started the Age of Discovery.

28. Columbus

The news of the Portuguese discoveries, the news that ships had sailed to unknown shores, spread all over Europe. People's minds were stirred by these stories; in the old days people had some hazy idea that there was, far away, something called Africa or something called India, but no one had given much thought to what these far-away places looked like. Now it was different: there came tales of great riches — gold, precious stones, ivory — in these far-away lands and everybody wanted to know more about these strange places.

Yet, people still had very odd ideas about Africa and Asia. One can still see maps of that time which show Java inhabited by men and women with tails. Another map shows how cotton grows in India; it shows a tree which has little sheep as fruit hanging from the branches.

But these maps were very popular and people all over Europe wanted maps to see what the world was like. Map-making became a new profession. And all this interest in far-away lands and in maps had been sparked by Prince Henry the Navigator and by the discoveries made by his ships.

Portugal's rivals, Venice and Genoa, were still engaged in the spice trade. Genoa also engaged in another profitable trade. There was very fine cloth made in Italy and the ships of Genoa carried this fine Italian cloth through the Strait of Gibraltar and then to England. The English paid good money for the cloth. And so Genoese ships frequently sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar and past the coast of Portugal on their way to England. It was not always a safe journey, because French ships made a habit of attacking the ships of Genoa and robbing them of their valuable cargo. There were regular sea-battles between French and Genoese ships.

In the year 1476 (about 66

Arc and sixteen years after the death of Prince Henry) there was one such battle between French and Genoese ships only a few miles from the coast of Portugal. The ships from Genoa were unlucky and were sunk, and many of the sailors drowned. One young Genoese sailor, although badly wounded, caught hold of a wooden plank in the water which kept him afloat. For hours he drifted helplessly, but luck was with him and the waves flung him ashore on the coast of Portugal. The name of this young Genoese sailor was Christopher Columbus.

The Portuguese who found the shipwrecked sailor were kind and helpful; they looked after him and when Columbus had recovered he made his way to Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. Lisbon was very different from his home town Genoa. Genoa's port was slowly dying, there was less and less trade every year, but Lisbon was a flourishing port teeming with vessels bringing spices from the East — gold-dust, ivory and slaves from Africa. Sailors from many nations thronged in the streets. Columbus decided he would not go back to his own land, to Italy, he would stay in this prosperous, lively port of Lisbon. He was good at drawing maps, and so he settled down as a map-maker. He did well in this trade, and married a Portuguese girl, the daughter of one of the captains who had discovered Madeira for Prince Henry.

As a map-maker, Columbus studied every map he could get hold of and one day he bought a map made by a fellow Italian, Toscanelli. Now this Toscanelli had read the books of a famous Italian traveller, Marco Polo, who two hundred years earlier had travelled to Cathay visiting the lands of Kublai Khan. Marco Polo had travelled east to reach China and India. But this Italian map-maker, Toscanelli, two hundred years later, had a new idea. If the earth was round, it should be possible to get to Asia, to China, to India by sailing *west:* if you went on and on west, you were bound to come to Asia in the end.

Now this is quite true. But this map-maker, Toscanelli, made one great mistake. He had no idea of the real size of the earth — and he imagined the earth to be much smaller than it really is. And so on his map the coast of China was only three thousand miles west of Portugal. The real distance is about ten thousand

This was not an easy task. Even now there are many parts of the Bible on which learned men do not agree how they should be translated. There is a strange story about what happened to Luther when he was translating the Bible at the Wartburg.

He was always a hard worker, sitting over his translation deep in the night. Perhaps he fell asleep over his work and only dreamed what he saw; but, one night it seemed to him that the light of his candle grew very dim, a strange cold wind came from nowhere and made him shudder and at the same time an unpleasant, vile stench assailed his nose. Luther who had not lifted his head from his writing, now looked up and saw before him a dark shape, like a shadow, but a shadow with bat's wings and horns. And this black shape placed a dark, claw-like hand over Luther's writing, as if it wanted to stop him from going on with it. But Luther, as you have seen on other occasions, was not easily frightened. He was only angry that there was something which interfered with his work. He was very angry and he took the inkpot from his desk and threw it at the dark shape. And as the glass shattered on the wall the dark shape, the stench and the cold air disappeared in an instant. All that remained was a big splash of ink on the wall.

The Wartburg castle where Luther translated the Bible into German still stands and visitors who go there can still see the ink-blot on the wall made by Luther when he threw the inkpot at the devil.

After a year Luther could leave the Wartburg, for the Emperor was fighting a war against France and had no time to bother about a troublesome monk.

So Luther returned to Wittenberg where his friends received him with joy. He could now work for the new kind of Church he had in mind: a free Church, independent of the Pope, independent of Rome. The new kind of Church was called Protestant, for the people who joined it protested against the shameful practices of Rome.

Luther took one more step away from the customs of the Roman Catholic Church. There was nothing in the Bible that priests should not marry. It was only a rule made by the Pope.

Gregory the Great. And as the rules of Popes did not count any longer for Luther, he put away his monk's habit and married.

All his life Luther hoped that the great movement which had started would not lead to bloodshed. He died at the age of sixty-three and so was spared to see the massacres and wars which the Reformation brought.

46. Calvin and Knox

Luther was not alone in challenging the authority of the Pope; there were by then many thousands of people who took his side, many thousands who all felt that the Church of Rome was no longer a true Church of Christ. These people supported Luther. But the wisest and most clever people at that time did not agree with Luther. They knew, just as Luther did, that there were evil Popes; they knew that the selling of indulgences was a shame and a disgrace for the Church. Yet these wise and learned men were more worried about Luther than about the evil Popes. They said: "Yes, there is much that needs changing in the Church; there is much that is wrong and that must be put right. But this change should be made by good men who work within the Church, good men who are bishops, cardinals and might one day even become Popes. If rebels like Martin Luther break away from the Church and start some kind of Church of their own, there will be no end of it, there will be all kinds of hot-heads, each one starting his own Church, they will argue among themselves and it will only bring trouble and suffering. It would be far better if we all remained faithful sons of one Church — but make it a better Church than it is now."

That is why the wisest and best men in Europe were not for Luther, for they did not want this breaking up of one Church into many. They foresaw that great suffering would follow from it. But the wisest and best men are at all times only a few, they had no power, and neither side was ready to listen to them. And so the terrible events which they had foreseen, came to pass.

Once Luther had shown that it was possible to defy the Pope, once the Reformation had started, there came other "reformers" who were not only against the Pope but against Luther and against each other. Before the Reformation there

had, at least, been only one man who claimed to know the will of God; now there were many. Each of these reformers had supporters and followers who formed a Church of their own, and all these different "reformed" Churches were at loggerheads with the Church of Rome and with each other.

One of these reformers was a Frenchman, John Calvin. Like Luther he was first a priest of the Roman Catholic Church; like Luther he was upset by the evil ways of the Popes. When Calvin heard of the great changes in Germany, when he heard how Luther had succeeded against Rome, Calvin also left the Church of Rome and preached against it. But his own country, France, was ruled by King Francis who had no patience with heretics, and Calvin had to flee for his life. He went to Switzerland where he found a city which welcomed him: the city of Geneva.

In Geneva John Calvin became not only a preacher, after a short time the citizens of Geneva made Calvin a kind of ruler whose word was law. What he wished and what he said was law in Geneva. And life in Geneva was not easy under Calvin

Like Savonarola, he thought that luxury, vanity, comfort, made men evil and so the people of Geneva had to do without anything that was not absolutely necessary for life. No colourful clothes (as people used to have in those days) were allowed, only plain black. Dancing, drinking wine, and playing cards were forbidden. Not only that. Art, painting, statues were also a kind of luxury, so the churches had to be quite plain without a picture, statue or stained glass window. Any amusement or entertainment, was an unnecessary luxury, and so was forbidden. And if some of the people of Geneva broke these rules a number of times they were executed. So John Calvin's Church was a very stern one.

In Scotland too the time was ripe for change. The bishops owned more than half of the country's wealth, and the monks were so corrupt that you could hear anywhere in Scotland songs which mocked the sinful lives of the priests. Yet who would dare to speak against the Pope? Scotland was not Germany, and the King of Scotland, James V, would not allow any heretics. If you had been in St Andrews in 1528 you would have seen a bonfire

that was quite different from the bonfire in Wittenberg. In this bonfire in St Andrews a young Scotsman, Patrick Hamilton, was burned.

Patrick Hamilton had been to Germany and he had heard of Luther and the new Church which Luther had founded, a Church free of Rome. Patrick Hamilton thought this was wonderful and he came back to Scotland and began to preach — but not for long. He paid for his preaching at the stake in St Andrews.

But Patrick Hamilton's death did not stop the new ideas which were sweeping over Europe. The number of Protestants in Scotland grew, in spite of persecutions and burnings. And they even began to fight back. One day a group of Protestants stormed St Andrew's castle and they took Cardinal Beaton who had been their worst oppressor, and hanged him on the window of the castle.

So both sides, Roman Catholics and Protestants, fought and killed each other in the name of religion, and forgot that Christ had said: "Love your enemy."

The Scots had always been good friends with the French, and so James V, the King of Scotland, called for French ships to help him against the rebellious Protestants of St Andrews. The rebellion was suppressed and there was harsh punishment for the Protestants. One of them was taken to France and condemned to be a galley-slave chained to an oar under the heavy whip of the overseer, rowing with other poor wretches on a French ship. The name of this Protestant sufferer was John Knox. After one and a half years of this terrible life as a galley-slave, he escaped and made his way to Switzerland, to Geneva.

And that is how John Knox met John Calvin, the stern ruler of Geneva. But John Knox thought that Calvin was right, he thought Scotland should have the same kind of Church and life as Calvin had established in Geneva. He was so enthusiastic about this idea that he returned to Scotland despite the persecutions of Protestants.

But by now not only common people, but even noblemen and lords took the sides of the Protestants. They made a "covenant," a pledge to help each other and do all they could for

the new faith. So many people joined the covenant that the King could no longer suppress it. John Knox, who was also a great preacher, brought more and more people to his side. He became the leader of the Covenanters, and in the year 1560 he had the great satisfaction that the kind of Church he wanted, a Church as severe as Calvin's, was declared the Church of Scotland. After much bloodshed, burning and suffering, Scotland had broken away from Rome and had its own Church.

Under the influence of John Knox, pictures, statues, stained glass windows in Scottish churches were destroyed, and entertainments were abolished. But Knox did not execute people for disobeying his rules (as Calvin had done). He also had education very much at heart. Due to John Knox, Scotland became the only country at that time where even the children of the poor could go to school and have an education.

As it was with many reformers, there are things one can like in John Knox but also things which it is hard to like.

47. Henry VIII

The Reformation was, first of all, just the same change in the human mind which we have already seen in the inventions, in the voyages of discovery, in Copernicus with his new idea about sun and earth, in the Renaissance painters and the use of perspective in painting.

The Reformation came because people no longer tolerated the old ways and the authority of the Pope. There had been some quite wicked Popes a few hundred years earlier — there was even a time when there were two Popes who stood against each other, one in Rome and one in Avignon, in France. Yet in these times when there were two Popes, people still looked up to one or other of the Popes but they never questioned whether there should be a Pope or not. But now people no longer felt that they needed or wanted the authority of the Pope.

But there were also other people who did not want a change, who wanted to uphold the authority of the Popes, for these people even a wicked Pope was better than having no Pope at all.

And it is very interesting to see what happened. In the south of Europe — in Spain, Portugal, Italy, people remained faithful to the Church of Rome and the authority of the Pope. In these sunny warm lands of Europe, the new spirit did not touch religion; but people became discoverers like Columbus or Magellan, or artists like Leonardo and Raphael. They used the new spirit for discoveries or in art. But in the colder countries of the north there was as yet little in the way of discoveries, and art also changed only slowly. North of the Alps the new spirit, the spirit of new things turned to religion and so brought the Reformation.

But it was not so in these countries that all people wanted a new Church, or that all people wanted to break away from

Rome, and so there was suffering and bloodshed. In Scotland the Protestants grew so strong that in the end the King who was a Roman Catholic and who did not want the Reformation, had to give in and John Knox's ideas led to the Church of Scotland.

In England it was just the opposite. There the Reformation came by the will of the King. That is one difference between Scotland and England: in Scotland the Reformation came through the people, in England through the King.

These two men, John Knox and Henry VIII of England were also as persons the very opposite of each other. John Knox was of small stature and thin. He ate and drank very little, just as much as was necessary. The English King, Henry VIII, was tall and immensely fat; whenever he ate a meal he gorged himself. John Knox was a severe, strict man but he wanted nothing for himself; all his life and all his work was for his Church and for Scotland. Henry VIII thought only of his own good: the Church and the English people existed only for his own benefit and his own convenience. He was a fat, foul-tempered bully who cared only for himself.

Henry VIII was, of course, like everybody else at that time a Roman Catholic and was not interested in any change. When he heard of Luther he called him a madman, and when a few people in England began to preach against Rome, Henry had them burnt at the stake. But Henry VIII was married to a Spanish princess, Catherine, who had borne him a daughter, Mary. And the time came when Henry no longer loved his wife and wanted to divorce her and marry a beautiful lady, Anne Boleyn. But the Catholic Church does not allow divorces. King Henry thought the Pope in Rome would make an exception for him, but he was mistaken. The Pope refused to allow Henry to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon.

Henry had sent an old English cardinal to Rome to plead with the Pope. When the old man came back with the news the Pope had refused, the King went into a towering rage. The poor old cardinal was sent to prison, but died on the way. Then Henry declared: "The Pope and his Church will not divorce me from my wife. I will have a Church that has nothing to do with Rome."

The English Parliament had no liking for Rome or the Pope, and so at the wish of King Henry a law was passed that, in England, the head of the Church was no longer the Pope, but the King. Priests of the Church, monks, bishops, who would not take an oath to recognize the King as head of the Church were executed.

So the Church which Henry had founded was not a new, reformed Church, like John Knox's or Calvin's or Luther's. It was the old Church, only now Henry, not the Pope, was the head of it. In this way the Church of England is different from all the other Churches which came out of the Reformation.

The new Church, the Church of England, had, of course to obey King Henry and he divorced from his wife, the Spanish princess, and married the beautiful Anne Boleyn. She bore him a daughter, Elizabeth, who was to become one of the great queens of history.

But Anne Boleyn herself was not Henry's wife for long. He got tired of her, and did not even bother to divorce her. Poor Anne was executed. After her Henry had four more wives, one after another — who either died naturally or were executed or divorced.

Henry VIII was a cruel, brutal man, but strangely enough the people of England liked him. They were glad to be rid of an Italian Pope; they would rather have an Englishman as head of the Church, even if he was a terrible man. They liked King Henry because he took all the land and wealth away from the monasteries and closed them down. The people of England liked that as they had come to think of the monks as useless lazy men, good for nothing.

The common people liked King "Hal" and when war broke out between Scotland and England, the English soldiers fought so well for Henry, that the Scots suffered terrible defeats at Flodden Field and Solway Moss.

After Henry's death, England went through a hard time, his only son, Edward VI ruled only a few years, then he died. The next ruler was Mary, the daughter of the Spanish princess whom Henry had divorced. Mary was a terrible queen — she wanted to bring the Roman Catholic faith back, and the English men or

women who spoke against this were burned at the stake. In five years of Mary's rule three hundred people were burned for this crime. When she died all the people in England were rejoicing and looking forward to the new Queen, Elizabeth I, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, for she was a Protestant.

48. Mary Queen of Scots

The new age, the new spirit, showed itself more among the common people than among the noblemen and kings. Columbus, Leonardo, Copernicus, Luther, John Knox, all came from the common people.

And it was also the common people who welcomed the Reformation — at least most of them. The noblemen were more or less evenly divided for or against the Reformation. And the Kings were, to begin with, all against the Reformation.

The German Emperor declared Luther an outlaw. The King of France solved the problem of the French Protestants by a terrible massacre: in one night, St Bartholomew's Night, thirty thousand Protestants were slaughtered in France. In Scotland, James V tried to destroy the Protestant movement by executions and burning, but in Scotland the movement only grew stronger and, in the end, the Church of Scotland was established against the will of King James.

In England Henry VIII was also against the Reformation and heretics were burnt at the stake. It was only later, and for his own selfish reasons, that Henry VIII established a Church separated from Rome.

But through this, England was more fortunate than other countries. In England the ruler and the great majority of the people belonged to the same Church, the Church of England. And when Elizabeth became Queen, she too was in the fortunate position to belong to the Church which most of the people wanted, the Protestant Church of England. There were only few Catholic sympathisers left in England.

Scotland was not so fortunate. For the most part the people belonged to the Church of Scotland, but the Royal Family, the Stuarts, remained Roman Catholics, and so did quite a number

of noblemen. In Scotland royalty and the people were divided by belonging to different Churches. That was the tragedy in the life of Mary, the daughter of James V.

When James V died, Mary was still a young child. Her mother, a French princess, sent her to France to be brought up at the Roman Catholic French Court, and so Mary grew up in a religion and in a country quite different from Scotland and the Church of Scotland.

When Mary was only sixteen years old she was married to the young King of France. It was the happiest time of her life. Mary was merry and charming, and the French courtiers were witty and amusing, they flattered and praised her. And her life was just one long round of amusements of dancing, parties, games without a care in the world.

But this joyful time of Mary's life lasted only two years. First her young husband died, and then her mother in Scotland also died, and Mary was called back to Scotland to become Queen of Scots.

For Mary it was a heart-breaking change from the merry life at the Court of France to Scotland where John Knox and his followers looked upon merriment as a sin. Mary was a Roman Catholic and remained one, attending Roman Catholic services in her chapel in Holyrood Palace. The people of Scotland never quite trusted her, fearing she would try to bring back the Catholic faith. John Knox, who was by then an old man, said very unkind things about Mary in his sermons.

Mary, with her Roman Catholic religion, with her love for fine, colourful dresses, and her love for parties, for dancing, for games, was like a stranger in Scotland, although she was the Queen. Then she did something that made her still less popular: she married a Catholic Scots nobleman, Lord Darnley. The Scots people did not like that at all. Now, Lord Darnley was quite good-looking — but Mary should not have fallen for his looks. He was an ill-tempered and coarse man, without education or manners. And Mary was soon very unhappy with her husband who did not really love her and had only married her in the hope of being crowned King of Scotland one day.

Although Lord Darnley did not really care for Mary he was

madly jealous of any man with whom Mary was friendly. She did not have many friends; but there was one, an Italian musician. He used to play for Mary and so gave the young lonely Queen some pleasure. But this enraged Lord Darnley and one day when Riccio, the Italian, was playing for the Queen, Lord Darnley and some of his friends dragged Riccio away and stabbed him to death.

Mary never forgave Darnley for this murder, but she did not show how she felt. And soon another man was often seen in her company, a Scots nobleman, Bothwell. Her husband, Darnley, was, perhaps, not very pleased with this friendship either, but now he kept away from Mary and hardly ever came to see her in Holyrood Palace. And then Lord Darnley fell ill. To everybody's surprise Mary showed suddenly great concern for her husband. She went to Glasgow and persuaded Darnley to be brought to Edinburgh where she could visit him daily.

Mary came regularly to visit the sick man. But one evening she came and apologized that she could not stay very long as there was a great dance held at Holyrood Palace. And that night while the windows of Holyrood Palace were bright with the light of hundreds of candles, while colourfully dressed courtiers and ladies thronged the large rooms of the palace, while the sound of music and laughter could be heard there was suddenly the roar of an explosion. The house where Darnley was lying on his sickbed had been blown up, and he and a page died in the explosion.

We shall never know who was behind this explosion that killed Darnley, but the Scots blamed Mary and her friend, Bothwell. When Mary married Bothwell three months after Darnley's death, it was too much. A great number of Protestant noblemen rose in rebellion against Mary. She was taken prisoner and kept imprisoned in a castle on an island in the middle of Loch Leven. She never saw her new husband, Bothwell, again. He escaped to Denmark and died there.

For a year Mary was imprisoned in that castle, but then a page stole the keys of the castle and with his help she escaped in a boat. And now Catholic noblemen came to help her; they gathered an army to fight against the Protestants who had

imprisoned Mary. And so Scotland was torn by a war between its own people. But in the end the Protestants were stronger, the Roman Catholics were defeated and Mary had to flee. No place in Scotland was safe for her, and she fled to England, hoping that Elizabeth, who was a cousin of hers, would give her shelter and protection.

But Elizabeth gave Mary Stuart only a very cold welcome. There was still a number of Catholics in England who might well have tried a rebellion to make Mary the Queen of England. Elizabeth was not going to take any risks. And so Mary was taken to Fotheringhay Castle, and kept a prisoner there for nineteen years.

But even as a prisoner Mary Stuart was a danger to Elizabeth. The English Catholics made plans to free Mary. All these plots failed, but they showed that as long as Mary was alive, the English Catholics were thinking of rebellion against Elizabeth. When after nineteen years another such plot was discovered, the English Parliament persuaded Elizabeth that Mary had to die, and the English Queen signed Mary's death warrant.

And so it came that the beautiful Queen of Scotland was led at Fotheringhay to a great hall hung with black. Her servants cried bitterly, but Mary comforted them and said that for her, death was a release from prison. Calmly and proudly she walked to the executioner's block in the middle of the hall and put her head down on the block for the executioner's axe. When the axe came down, it ended a sad life which had not known much happiness.

49. The Great Armada

Mary, Queen of Scots, was a warm-hearted woman of strong feelings. And she followed her feelings rather than her head, and so did many foolish things. Elizabeth, Queen of England, was a clever person. She did not have the warmth and charm of Mary and she did not follow her feelings, but thought over and weighed up everything she did. For a queen, this was better by far than Mary's way. For Elizabeth, cool and level-headed as she was, had a great sense of responsibility: what she did was for the benefit of England. Mary, driven and swayed by her emotions and feelings, brought up in France, had no sense of responsibility for Scotland.

That is why Mary is one of the tragic queens of history, while Elizabeth, who had neither charm nor beauty, became one of the great queens of history: she never forgot that she had a duty towards her people.

England was going through great dangers and hardships at that time, and these dangers and hardships came from Spain. Spain was immensely powerful; enormous riches came from the colonies in the New World and vast numbers of Spanish ships sailed the seas. The Spanish ships were larger and the number of ships greater than that of any other navy. The ruler of this mighty Spanish Empire was Philip II, the son of Charles V, who had declared Luther an outlaw.

Now Philip II was not only a devout Roman Catholic, he was fanatical. He had only one great aim in life: to destroy the Reformation and to force the authority of the Pope back on the people who had broken away from Rome.

He could do nothing about Germany which was ruled by another son of Charles V, but Belgium and Holland were under Philip's rule and in these unhappy countries the Protestants

were burned by the hundreds. And Philip's great ambition was to bring these "blessings" also to the people of England and, by force and terror, make England a Roman Catholic country again. Philip nearly had an opportunity to do this, for as a young prince he married the terrible Queen Mary who had ruled England before Elizabeth. But when Mary died, Elizabeth became Queen. Now Philip made another attempt to get England under his power the easy way: through the Spanish ambassador in London came the proposal that Elizabeth should marry Philip.

Of course, Elizabeth would have to become Roman Catholic, and of course, the English Protestants would be forced by terror, by persecution, to return to the Church of Rome, but imagine what a mighty empire this union of Spain and England would have been. For an ambitious person — and Elizabeth was ambitious — it must have been a very tempting offer, to become Queen of England, Spain and the vast colonies in America. But Elizabeth also knew that by marrying Philip she would bring terrible misery and suffering to all the Protestants in England, to the great majority of her people. And so she refused the offer.

Philip was furious that his proposal of marriage had been rejected. But he had soon reason to be still more annoyed by England. At this time the people of England began to realize that the future of their country was to become a sea-power.

The ships of Prince Henry had made Portugal rich and the caravels of Columbus had given Spain untold wealth and power. Britain, an island, surrounded by the sea, could only become great and prosperous with English ships and English sailors. And it was at the time of Elizabeth that the English navy began to grow, that adventurous English sailors set out on the high seas.

These English captains and sailors were rather like the Spanish Conquistadors: their main interest was wealth, gold and treasure, and they did not care how they gained fortunes, as long as they could get rich by it.

And the simplest way to gain wealth was by pouncing on the

Spanish ships carrying gold and silver from America to Spain. The brave English sailors were simply pirates, but they were the most daring pirates in the world. One or two English ships would not only capture much bigger Spanish ships, they would sometimes attack one of the big Spanish ports in America, plunder it and sail away loaded with booty.

Philip, King of Spain, was thoroughly annoyed with this impudence of the English. As long as Mary Queen of Scots lived Philip had hoped that the Roman Catholics in England would set her free making her Queen of England, and he could then marry her. But when Mary was executed, there was an end to these hopes.

So Philip decided on one bold stroke which would finish Elizabeth who had insulted him by refusing marriage, the English navy which robbed his treasure ships, and the Protestant Church of England which he had always wanted to destroy.

All three things should be accomplished with one mighty blow by the ships of Spain. Preparations began in Spain to send the largest fleet the world had ever seen, against England. The fleet would not only attack English ports, but also carry a vast army to invade England and to occupy it. The dockyards of Spain worked in frantic haste to build more and more ships, and the Spanish warships from all over the world were called back to join the great fleet.

While all this great work of preparation was going on an English captain, Francis Drake suddenly appeared with a handful of English ships in the Spanish port of Cadiz, and before the Spaniards recovered from their surprise, ten great Spanish galleons and twenty smaller vessels were sunk. As Drake sailed away he caught a Spanish treasure ship and took from it a cargo of gold worth one million pounds. When Francis Drake arrived back in England, he said: "I have singed the beard of the King of Spain."

This important stroke made Philip only more eager to punish England, and in May 1588 the great fleet was ready. It was called the Great Armada. The great Armada was a fleet of seventy large and sixty smaller ships. The large galleons of about

five hundred tons, were swimming fortresses, carrying about three hundred men each. The whole Armada of a hundred and thirty ships carried twenty thousand soldiers and eight thousand sailors. Against this mighty fleet the English had only thirty-four much smaller vessels and fifteen thousand sailors. The English fleet was commanded by Lord Howard of Effingham, an experienced sailor, while the Armada was under the Duke of Medina Sidonia, of very noble family, who knew nothing about ships or sailing.

The English were certainly not afraid of the enemy's might. Francis Drake who was one of the captains under Lord Howard was at Plymouth playing a game of bowls when the news came that the Armada was approaching England. "Time enough to finish this game and to beat the Spaniards," said Drake. And he calmly finished the game before sailing against the enemy.

When the Armada appeared beacon fires blazed from one end of England to the other to warn the people. And Queen Elizabeth went to her fleet and spoke to the sailors and her words stirred the hearts of the men.

As the Spanish ships came into the Channel a strong gale blew up which made most of the twenty thousand soldiers so sea-sick that they were no use at all. Moreover, the high galleons could hardly be steered in heavy weather and the little English ships darted in and out between them, doing great damage and getting away before the Spaniards could hit back. This game lasted a whole week, and all that week the gale grew fiercer and fiercer. More and more Spanish ships ran aground, and then the Spanish admiral made the mistake of ordering his ships to seek shelter on the French coast at Calais. There the Spanish ships were crowded together and the English sent fire-ships among them, and the Spanish galleons, trying to get out of the way of the fire-ships, ran into each other.

By the end of the week the gale became so wild that even the English ships took to their ports. The Armada tried to get away by sailing round Scotland to get back, but the roaring storm shattered so many ships on the rocks and islands that, in the end, only fifty broken, battered vessels reached Spain. But

the English had lost only two hundred men and not a single ship.

All over England bells rang and bonfires were lit. Elizabeth ordered that a special medal be struck in memory of this great occasion. On that medal was the inscription: "God blew and they were scattered by His breath."

50. Elizabethan Times: Shakespeare, Raleigh

When the Great Armada came, the people of England rallied around their Queen. If the Spaniards had landed they would have found every Englishman, from the peasant in his hut to the lord in his manor, ready to fight to his last breath. They loved their Queen. When it became known she would pass through a street, people gathered together hours before and gave her rousing cheers when she came. They called her "Good Queen Bess," but the courtiers invented better-sounding names for her. They called her the Virgin Queen because she never married, or they called her Gloriana, the glorious one.

These were flattering names, and Queen Elizabeth liked to be flattered. She was not really beautiful, but with her auburn hair and delicate complexion she had a striking appearance. And she helped this striking appearance by wearing the most glorious clothes. She set fashions which made the clothes of women and men in England more colourful, more showy, than they have ever been either before or after.

Women's dresses were made of silk, or from cloth of silver or gold. They wore immense skirts which were made to stand out by means of petticoats with wooden hoops. Men's clothes were just as colourful: graceful jackets slashed to show brightly coloured lining, short stuffed trousers, long stockings. Both men and women wore wide ruffs round their necks which stood out above the shoulders and high behind the head. Jewellery was worn by men and women, and many men wore an ear-ring, a large single pearl or jewel.

The crude eating habits of earlier times disappeared, and for

the first time people began to use forks, knives, spoons, instead of their fingers. The houses, too changed. With the invention of gun-powder it was no longer any use to build castles which were like fortresses with moats and keeps. Now the noblemen built graceful large houses with large windows, wide doorways and spacious gardens. Some of these stately homes can still be seen today.

The English ships sailing the seas brought trade, money and prosperity; the rich people could find more leisure and time for art.

One can say at the time of Elizabeth the Renaissance came to England. In England it did not show itself in paintings or sculptures, but the Renaissance came in a different art: in poetry and in plays.

As the Italian people had become interested in paintings, so the English became fascinated by the writing and the production of plays. Queen Elizabeth had special plays performed for her at her royal court. Literally thousands of plays were written and performed in her time. The greatest of all the writers of that time, and the greatest of all English writers of all times, was William Shakespeare.

At that time actors formed little groups and at about the time of the Armada, William Shakespeare joined such a troupe of players in London. At first he was only a kind of stage-hand. There is even a story that he used to look after the horses of people who came to see the plays. Then he became an actor himself and, after a time, he began to write plays for his group of players who performed at the Globe Theatre in London. Shakespeare had learned the art of acting from scratch, he knew from his own experience what is effective on the stage, and this no doubt contributed to his plays having the power they have to this day.

As the Renaissance produced Leonardo or Michelangelo in Italy, in England it produced the great genius of Shakespeare. But the Renaissance, the time of Elizabeth I, produced all kinds of colourful personalities, people of amazing gifts in many directions. Such a person of many gifts who lived at that time was Sir Walter Raleigh.

The best way to be in her favour was to flatter Queen Elizabeth. Now one day she was travelling in a coach through the streets of London, with some of her courtiers. As usual, crowds gathered to cheer her and, in order to show herself to her people, Elizabeth ordered the coach to stop and stepped out of it. And there, right in front of her, was a big puddle of mud. If she made another step her dainty shoes would sink into the mud and her satin skirt would be splattered. And as she hesitated, not knowing what to do, a young man stepped forward, he wore a fine scarlet cloak on his shoulders. In a moment he tore the cloak from his shoulders and threw it over the puddle. The Queen could now safely step on the cloak and reached a dry patch. But then she turned to the young man and ordered him to come with her to the court. He had spoiled his fine coat, but he had made his fortune.

The young man was Walter Raleigh and he became the Queen's favourite courtier. He had been poor but the Queen gave him so large gifts of money and land, and later knighted him. But Sir Walter Raleigh was not only an elegant courtier, he was a clever man and the Queen followed his advice in matters of government. And so it came that Sir Walter Raleigh changed the course of history. He once spoke to the Queen and said: "Spain has become rich and powerful through his colonies in the New World, in America. If England is to become a great nation, then we too must have colonies in America. We are not strong enough to take the Spanish colonies in South America, but Spain has not touched North America. Let us establish English colonies in North America, and we shall in time be greater than the Spaniards."

The Queen agreed with Raleigh's advice, but she would not let him go from the court although he longed for adventure. He was not allowed to sail across the Atlantic and to found an English colony in America. But Sir Walter Raleigh was rich enough to buy ships and to send men to America. And so the first English colony in North America was established through Sir Walter Raleigh. In order to flatter the Virgin Queen Elizabeth, this first English colony was called Virginia. It is now one of the United States and still bears the name

Virginia. And due to the far-seeing policy of Sir Walter Raleigh, English has remained the main language of North America.

The English colonists in North America had to face great hardships, and they had to fight fierce native tribes. But they also learned from the native Americans. They learned from them the use of a peculiar American plant: tobacco. Soon the habit spread to Europe and made the colonists rich. Virginia tobacco is still grown today. Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the first to try the new habit of smoking. A servant who saw smoke coming from Raleigh's nose and mouth thought his master was on fire and threw a bucket of water over him.

Much more important was another American plant: the potato. In earlier times when the wheat-harvest happened to be bad, there was famine and starvation. Now, people could fall back on potatoes when there was not enough bread. Raleigh was the first to have potatoes planted on his farms in England — and so brought something worth more than gold.

When Queen Elizabeth died she appointed as her successor to the throne of England James VI, the son of Mart Stuart, who was already King of Scotland. James VI had made no move to rescue his mother when she was condemned to death: he did not want to rouse the anger of Elizabeth and so lose his chance to become King of England. At Elizabeth's death he then became King of Scotland and England. For the first time in history the two countries were united and remained so.

Under King James, Sir Walter Raleigh could at last follow his thirst for adventure. As there was no gold in North America, Sir Walter Raleigh went to South America in search of a fabulous land called Eldorado where, so people said, even houses were made of solid gold. Raleigh and his men went through terrible hardships and dangers in the jungle, but never found Eldorado. And when Raleigh returned to England the Spaniards complained that he had attacked Spanish colonists and broken the peace between Spain and England. King James, who wanted peace with Spain, had Raleigh arrested and imprisoned. While Raleigh was in prison he wrote a book, a history of the world

from the beginning to his own time. He was a very learned man as well as a wise statesman and fearless explorer. But King James had no liking for the man who had been the favourite of Elizabeth and, in the end, Raleigh was condemned to death and beheaded for having attacked Spaniards.

51. Francis Drake

The Age of Discovery, the Renaissance, the Time of the Reformation are all names for the same period of time. When Columbus discovered America in 1492, Leonardo was a man in his forties and Martin Luther was a boy of nine: they were all children of the same new age, and in different ways they showed the same adventurous spirit. Copernicus, who surprised the world by saying that the earth moves round the sun, was twenty years old when Columbus discovered America.

An imaginary person who lived from 1500 to 1600 could have met all the famous people of that one century: Magellan and Pizarro, Calvin in Geneva, John Knox in Scotland and Savonarola in Florence, Michelangelo in Rome and William Shakespeare in London; and he could have seen the Great Armada as well as Walter Raleigh's first English colonists sailing to Virginia in America. This imaginary person would have met bold and adventurous spirits in all these people — for that was what they all had in common.

One of the English sea-captains, in his own rough and tough way, had just that spirit of boldness and adventure that belongs to that time. Francis Drake was, at first, simply a merchant sailor, a sea-captain who used his ships for trade. We would not have liked his trade, but in those days it was regarded as ordinary business. He sailed his ships to Africa where he and his men caught Africans who were then shipped to the Spanish colonies in America. The Spanish colonists paid well for slaves, and Drake was quite content in selling slaves to the Spaniards. (All this was many years before the Armada.)

One day, with five ships under his command, Drake had sold a cargo of slaves to Spanish colonists, and had bought all kinds of goods in America which he expected to sell profitably in

England. He was a very good businessman. But on the way back Drake's ships ran into a storm and took shelter in an island off the South American coast. This island was also a Spanish colony. The Spaniards seemed quite friendly and Drake had no reason to fear any harm from them. But when the gale was over and Drake's ships were about to sail away, the Spanish opened fire and three of Drake's ships were sunk with all men aboard. Drake escaped with two of his ships, but he swore he would make the Spaniards pay for their treachery.

England was still at peace with Spain, and Queen Elizabeth was not at all anxious to start a war with Spain for the sake of three ships, so Drake began a one-man war of his own against Spain.

Drake prepared himself well for this war. For a whole year he sailed up and down the coast of America on which the Spanish colonies were until he knew every little bay and island. This American coast-line with its rich, great ports was called the Spanish Main. He also made friends with runaway slaves. There were a few thousand slaves who had run away from their cruel Spanish masters and who lived like savages in the jungle along the South American coast where the Spaniards could never catch them. These desperate and wild gangs became staunch allies of Francis Drake.

Then he was ready to begin his own private war. His new allies had told him that there was a regular train of five hundred mules carrying silver from the mines of Peru to a sea-port near Panama. From there ships carried the silver to Spain. Drake decided to take the silver before it got to the port.

He had two ships which he left on a wild stretch of the coast. Then he set out with fifty men into the jungle to ambush the silver-laden mules. Now Drake had been told that every twenty mules had one leading mule, and if this leading mule would lie down the other twenty would do the same; they had been trained to do so. When the mule-train came, the Spanish escorts were suddenly greeted with a hail of bullets and they ran for their lives without first counting the attackers. As soon as the Spanish soldiers were gone, Drake and his men made the leading mule lie down and all the others did the same; the

Englishmen now took the silver off the mules. One part they buried in the forest and came and fetched it a few months later. But they took as much as they could carry to the ships and sailed away.

After this first blow, Drake left the Spaniards no peace. Up and down the Spanish Main he sailed. He stopped any Spanish ship, his men went aboard and took away any valuable cargo before the Spanish ship could sail on. Drake's ships were soon loaded with plunder. But he never harmed a woman or man unless there was resistance. When he had plundered two hundred Spanish ships he returned to England where he was welcomed as a hero.

The next time Drake set out, it was with the help and approval of Queen Elizabeth. That voyage became famous as the voyage of the *Golden Hind*. It was the first English voyage round the world.

At first Drake had no intention to sail round the world; he had already plundered the Spanish colonies on the east coast of America; now he wanted to attack the fabulously rich colonies on the west coast. To do this, Drake had to sail where Magellan had sailed: through the Strait of Magellan.

Drake set out with three ships, but two were lost in a storm and only one ship, his *Golden Hind* made the voyage. The *Golden Hind* sailed through the Strait of Magellan and appeared on the west coast where nobody expected an English ship.

So Drake simply sailed into the big harbour at Valparaiso, shot up the Spanish ships lying at anchor, and then his men seized the whole city of Valparaiso and took what they wanted. They then sailed away happily and, on the way out, captured a Spanish galleon carrying one million pounds worth of gold and jewels.

But by now the enraged Spaniards had got a whole fleet together, waiting at the Strait of Magellan to catch Drake on his way back. But Drake got to know about it and decided he need not go back through the Strait of Magellan: the world was round and he could go back round the world as Magellan's ship had done.

So, like Magellan, he sailed across the Pacific Ocean, past

India, round Africa and reached England after three years absence, and with the greatest treasure ever gained by a single ship. Most of that went to Queen Elizabeth, but he was knighted by her and became Sir Francis Drake. The *Golden Hind* is one of the famous ships of history, like the *Santa Maria* and the *Victory*.

The next time Drake sailed out, he performed the boldest stroke of his life. The capital of the Spanish Colonies was Cartagena, an immensely rich city with strong fortifications, and great guns pointing towards the sea. Drake let his ships feign an attack from the sea, but in the night he led a thousand men through swamps to the rear of Cartagena. The defenders were completely taken by surprise, and in a few hours, Drake was master of the city. The citizens of Cartagena had to pay him an enormous ransom before he left and sailed back to England.

No enemy ever got the better of Francis Drake, but he died of malaria while sailing on another venture against the Spanish Main. He was one of the greatest seamen of history.

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Charles Kovacs

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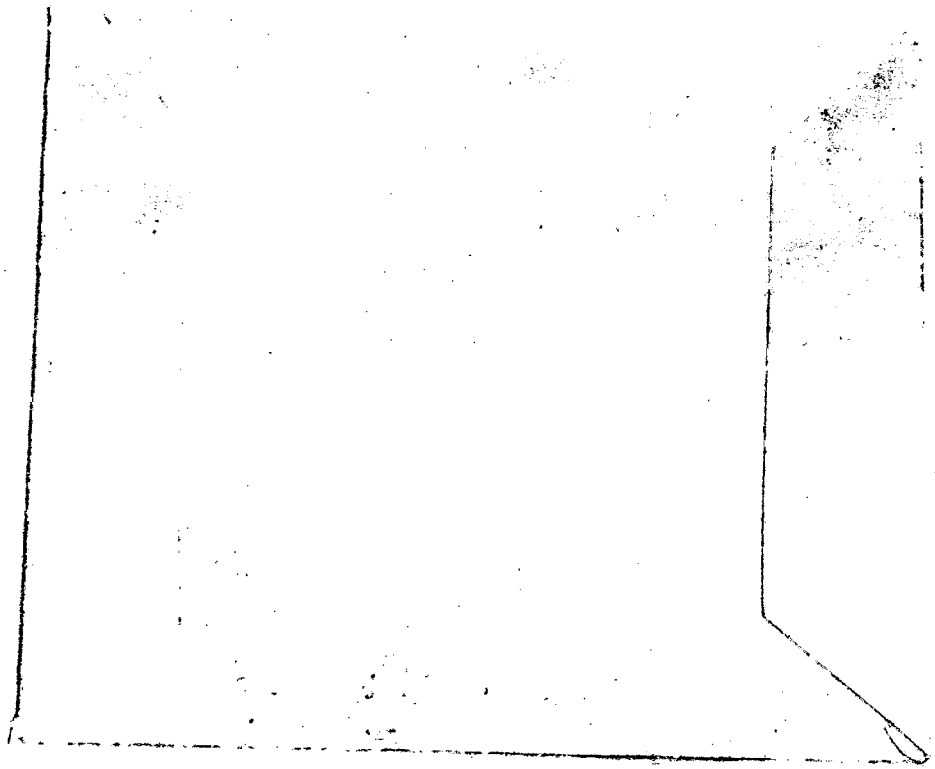

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