

III

CLOVIS AND THE MEROVINGIANS

(481-752)

The Franks.—In the third century before Christ the Germans had formed on the right bank of the Rhine two confederations: on the south, that of the Suevic tribes, who called themselves the Alemanni or men; on the north, that of the Salii, the Sicambri, the Bructeri, the Cherusci and the Catti, who took the name of Franks or the brave. They are first mentioned by Roman writers in 241 when Aurelian, then legionary tribune, defeated a body of Franks on the lower Rhine. Probus recaptured from them the Gallic cities which they had attacked on the death of Aurelian, and transported a colony of them to the Black Sea (277). A little later others crossed the Rhine, devastated Belgium and received from Julian authority to establish themselves on the banks of the Meuse which they had ravaged. Several of the Frankish chiefs rose to high positions in the empire. Thus Arbogast was the prime minister of Valentinian II and disposed of the purple.

Twelve years after his death the Franks, already established in northern Gaul, tried to arrest the great invasion of 406. Failing in this they wished to obtain their share of these provinces which the emperor himself was abandoning, and their tribes advanced into the interior of the country, each one under its own chieftain or king. At that time there were Frankish kings at Cologne, Tournay, Cambrai and Thérouanne. Of these kings, Clodion, chief of the Salian Franks of the country of Tongres or Limburg, is the first whose existence has been well authenticated. Pharamond, his reputed predecessor, is mentioned only in later chronicles. He captured Tournay and Cambrai, put to death all the Romans whom he found and advanced toward the Somme which he crossed; but in the neighborhood of Sens was vanquished by the Roman general Aëtius (448).

He did not survive his defeat. Merovig his kinsman succeeded. He joined three years later with all the barbarians quartered in Gaul and with the rest of the Romans in resisting the Huns. The battle of Châlons (451) against Attila cost the lives, it is said, of 300,000 men and rescued the barbarian nations encamped between the Rhine and the Pyrenees.

Childeric, the son of Merovig, was expelled by the Franks who were disgusted at his excesses. He was replaced by the Roman general Ægidius. Recalled at the end of eight years, he reigned over the Franks until his death and was interred in Tournay, where his tomb was discovered in 1633. His son Chlodowig or Clovis was the real founder of the Frankish monarchy.

Clovis. — In 481 Clovis possessed only a few districts of Belgium with the title of king of the Salian Franks, who had settled in the neighborhood of Tournay. He commanded 4000 or 5000 warriors. Five years later he defeated near Soissons Syagrius, the son of Ægidius, who governed in the name of the empire the country between the Somme and the Loire. He forced the Visigoths among whom the vanquished general had taken refuge to give him up, put him to death and subdued the country as far as the Loire.

In 493 he married Clotilde, daughter of a Burgundian king, herself an Orthodox Christian. This union had the happiest results for Clotilde soon converted her husband. As all the barbarians established in Gaul were Arians and hence in orthodox eyes equivalent to heretics, Clovis became the hope of the orthodox Gauls. Even before his conversion, Amiens, Beauvais, Paris and Rouen had opened their gates, thanks to the influence of their bishops. The Alemanni having crossed the Rhine, Clovis marched against them. He was on the point of being vanquished, when he invoked the God of Clotilde. Success seemed granted to his prayer, and the Alemanni were thrust back beyond that river and pursued into Suabia. On his return Clovis was baptized with 3000 of his men by Saint Remi, archbishop of Reims. As the archbishop sprinkled the holy water on the head of the neophyte he said to him, "Bow thy head, softened Sicambrian. Adore what thou hast burned; burn what thou hast adored." An Arian sister of Clovis was baptized at the same time (496). The Gallo-Roman inhabitants, oppressed by the Arian Burgundians and Visigoths, thence-

forth centred their affections and hopes in the converted chieftain of the Franks. All the episcopate was on his side. "When thou fightest," wrote to him Avitus, bishop of Vienne, "we share the victory." So they aided him in all his enterprises. Some of his liegemen deserted, but his successes and above all the booty they could gain under so skilful a leader brought them back.

The country between the Loire and the Somme was subjugated and Armorica won over to his alliance. Then he attacked the Burgundians (500), defeated their king Gundobad and made him pay tribute. Then one day he said to his soldiers, "It causes me great grief that those Arian Visigoths possess a part of this Gaul. Let us march with the help of God and after vanquishing them let us reduce their country to our power." The army crossed the Loire, by the express order of the king religiously respecting on its passage all the property of the churches. The Visigothic king Alaric II was beaten and slain at Vouillé near Poitiers. That city, Saintes, Bordeaux, Toulouse, opened their gates and Septimania with Nîmes, Béziers and Narbonne would have been conquered if Theodoric, the great head of the Ostrogoths, had not sent succor to his brethren of the West. On his return from this expedition Clovis found the ambassadors of the Emperor Anastasius who brought him the titles of consul and patrician with the purple tunic and robe. His last years were bloody. He slew Sigebert and Chloderic kings of Cologne, Chararic another petty Frankish king, Ragnachairus king of Cambrai, and Benomer king of the Mans, that he might seize their kingdoms and treasures. He died in 511 and was interred in the basilica of the Holy Apostles or Saint Geneviève which he himself had built. His reign had lasted thirty years, and his life forty-five.

At his death the state which he founded comprised all Gaul except Gasconne where no Frankish troop had made its appearance, and Brittany which was controlled by counts or military chiefs. The Alemanni in Alsace and Suabia were associates in the fortunes of the Franks rather than subject to the authority of their king. The Burgundians after paying tribute for a time fully intended to refuse it in future; and the cities of Aquitaine, feebly restrained by Frankish garrisons at Bordeaux and Saintes, remained almost independent.

As to the victorious nation united only for conquest and pillage it had contented itself with expelling the Visigoths from Aquitaine without replacing them. The war ended the Franks had returned with their booty to their former abodes between the Rhine and the Loire. Clovis himself had settled at Paris, a central position between the two rivers, whence he could more easily watch the provinces and his enemies.

The Sons of Clovis (511-561).—The four sons of Clovis shared his territories and followers, so that each one had a nearly equal portion of the land to the north of the Loire where the Frankish nation had settled, and also a part of the Roman cities of Aquitaine which paid rich tributes. Childebert was king of Paris; Clotaire, king of Soissons; Clodimir, king of Orleans; Thierry, king of Metz or Austrasia.

The impulse imparted by Clovis lasted for some time. His sons carried their arms to Thuringia, Burgundy, Italy and Spain. The Alemanni and the Bavarians had recognized them as suzerains, and the Saxons paid them tribute.

Frédégonde and Brunehaut.—Clotaire, one of the sons of Clovis, had reunited his father's kingdom in 558, but upon his death three years afterward the Frankish monarchy became again a tetrarchy by the partition of its states among his four sons: Caribert, king of Paris; Gontram, of Orleans and Burgundy; Sigebert, of Austrasia, and Chilperic, of Soissons. From that time rivalry began, destined to increase between the eastern Franks or Austrasians and the western Franks or Neustrians. The former were more faithful to the rude manners of Germany of which they were the neighbors. The latter were more accessible to the influence of that Roman civilization in the midst of which they had settled.

This opposition finds its first expression in the hatred of two women. Sigebert had married Brunehaut, the daughter of Athanagild king of the Visigoths, beautiful, learned and ambitious. Chilperic, desirous also of a royal wife, obtained the hand of Galswinthe, the sister of Brunehaut. Soon however he returned to his imperious concubine Frédégonde, who caused her rival to be strangled and took her place. Brunehaut burning to avenge her sister stirred up Sigebert to attack Neustria. Her husband, victorious,

was about to proclaim himself king of the Neustrians, when two servants of Frédégonde, "bewitched by her," stabbed him at the same time in the side with poisoned knives (575). As his son Childebert II was still a minor, the Austrasians were governed by a mayor of the palace. That official was originally a mere steward of the king's household, chosen from among his vassals. Supported by other vassals, the mayors of the palace were to acquire an important influence to the advantage of the barbarous aristocracy, already very hostile to royalty, and were to hold the feeble kings in tutelage until the moment came when they could take their place.

The years that followed are confused and bloody, filled with the turbulence of the leudes or liegemen, and above all with the fierce struggle between Brunehaut and Frédégonde. The former in the name of her children and grandchildren seized the power in both Austrasia and Burgundy. Her stern and orderly rule alienated her subjects, who proposed to Clotaire II, the son of Chilperic and Frédégonde, to make him their king if he would rid them of Brunehaut. Abandoned by her troops, she and her four grandsons were captured by Clotaire. He cut the throats of the young princes and had the aged queen fastened to the tail of a wild horse (613) which dashed her body to pieces.

Clotaire II (584) and Dagobert (628).—Clotaire II for the third time established the unity of the Frankish monarchy. Under his reign seventy-nine bishops and many laymen took part in the Council of Paris, which promulgated a so-called perpetual constitution whereby the power of the ecclesiastical and secular aristocracy was greatly increased. The taxes imposed were abolished, the fiefs granted were declared inalienable and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was extended.

The reign of Dagobert was the most brilliant of the Merovingian line and gave to the Franks preponderance in Western Europe. He stopped the incursions of the Venedi over whom a Frankish merchant had become king, opposed the incursions of the Slavonians into Thuringia and delivered Bavaria from a Bulgarian invasion. In Gaul he compelled the submission of the Vascons and the alliance of the Bretons whose chief had assumed the title of king. He chose clever ministers and won a legitimate popularity by traveling about his kingdom to administer justice in behalf of the small as the great. He revised the laws of the Salii, the

Riparii, the Alemanni and the Bavarians, encouraged commerce and industry and built the Abbey of Saint Denis.

The Sluggard Kings. The Mayors of the Palace (638-687).

— But Dagobert carried the power of the Merovingians with him to the tomb. After him came the sluggard kings. Nevertheless royalty found a formidable champion in Ebroin, mayor of the palace in Neustria, who with increased energy resumed the struggle of Brunehaut and Dagobert against the leudes and their chief, Saint Leger, bishop of Autun. In a document he wrote, "Those men have apparently forfeited their fiefs who are convicted of infidelity to those from whom they hold them." Many vassals who seemed too independent were put to death, deprived of their property or banished. The Austrasian vassals made common cause with the exiles. They deposed their Merovingian king and confided the power to the two mayors, Martin and Pepin d'Heristal, with the title of princes of the Franks. After the death of Ebroin they gained the battle of Testry and all Neustria in consequence (687). From that day forth Pepin d'Heristal reigned in reality though without assuming the title of king. His successors were to erect the Frankish Empire in which all the Germanic invasion is summed up.



IV

MOHAMMED AND THE ARAB INVASION

Arabia. Mohammed and the Koran. — After the German invasion which came from the north followed the Arab invasion from the south. Arabia, whose peoples then appeared for the first time on the scene of history, is a vast peninsula covering more than a million square miles. Northward it opens upon Asia through extensive deserts and is attached on the northwest to Africa by the Isthmus of Suez. Elsewhere it is surrounded by the Red Sea, the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Ormus and the Persian Gulf. The ancients, who had small acquaintance with it, divided it into three parts: Arabia Petraea or the peninsula of Sināi; Arabia Deserta or Nedjed, comprising the deserts which extend from the Red Sea to the Euphrates; and Arabia Felix or Yemen. Its religion was a mixture of Christianity, introduced by the Abyssinians and Greeks; of Sabeism, taught by the Persians; of Judaism, which had filtered in everywhere in the track of the Jews; and above all of idolatry. The temple of the Kaaba in the holy city of Mecca contained 360 idols, the custody of which was intrusted to the illustrious family of the Koreish. There was much religious indifference in the presence of so many faiths. The masses of population were kept together by the poets, who were already developing the language of Islam in those poetical tournaments, wherein the idea of Allah, the Supreme Being, a belief natural to such a country, frequently occurs.

Mohammed was born of Koreish parents in 570. Early an orphan and without fortune, he became a camel-driver and travelled in Syria where he became intimate with a monk of Bostra. His integrity and intelligence won the hand of a rich widow named Khadijah. Thenceforth he could give himself up to his meditations. At the age of forty his ideas were fixed.

To Khadijah, to his cousin Ali, to his freedman Seïd and

to his friend Abou-Bekr he disclosed his purpose of restoring to the religion of Abraham its primitive purity. He told them that he was receiving from God through the Angel Gabriel the verses of a book which was to be the book of all others, or the Koran. He designated his new religion as Islam or entire resignation to the divine will. His hearers believed in him and Abou-Bekr won over Othman and the fiery Omar to the new faith. The proselytes increased daily. Persecuted by the Koreish, he fled to Yatreb (622). With the year of the Hegira or Flight the Mussulman era begins.

Yatreb now became Medinat-al-Nabi, the city of the Prophet, commonly called Medina. At the battle of Bedr 300 of his followers defeated 1000 Koreish (624). Afterwards he was worsted at Mount Ohud, but gained a decisive advantage in the War of the Nations or of the Trench. Finally he reentered Mecca (630) where he destroyed all the idols, saying: "The truth has come. Let the falsehood disappear!" From that moment he was the religious leader of Arabia. He wrote threatening letters to Chosroes, king of Persia, and to Heraclius, emperor of the East, and was on the point of undertaking a holy war against them when he died (632).

The Koran is the collection of all the revelations which according to the occasion fell from the mouth of the Prophet, and which were collected in a first edition by the orders of the Caliph Abou-Bekr, and in a second by those of the Caliph Othman. Composed of one hundred and fourteen chapters or surates subdivided into verses, it contains both the religious and civil law of the Mussulmans. The basis of its dogma is fully summed up in these words, "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God." In Allah, the sole and jealous God, the Koran admits no plurality of persons and it places no inferior divinity beside him. It rejects all idea of God made man; but it teaches that God has revealed himself by a series of prophets, of whom Mohammed is the last and the most complete. Those who preceded him are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ, with whom God communicated through angels, his messengers. Mohammed acknowledged that Christ possessed the gift of miracles which he himself had not. He preached the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body and its participation in the joys or

sufferings of a future life. A delightful but sensual paradise was in store for the good, a burning hell for the bad. Nevertheless in this paradise which appealed to the vulgar crowd there are also spiritual joys. "The most favored of God will be he who shall behold his face evening and morning, a felicity which will surpass all the pleasures of the senses as the ocean surpasses a drop of dew."

He elevated the condition of Arab women. "A son," he said, "wins paradise at the feet of his mother." Before his day the daughters inherited nothing. He assigned to them one-half the portion of their brothers. While enforcing the authority of the husband, he bade him be a tender protector to his wife. Though he tolerated polygamy so as not to shock Eastern customs, he allowed a man only four legitimate wives, and advised that as a praiseworthy act a man should confine himself to one. The Koran prescribes severe penalties for theft, usury, fraud and false witness and enjoins alms. It minutely regulates the ritual of worship; the fast of Ramazan; the observance of the four sacred months, an ancient custom which like the truce of God suspended hostilities among the faithful; the great annual pilgrimage to Mecca where Mohammed had installed the seat of this new religion; the five daily prayers; the ablutions, either with water or sand; circumcision; abstinence from wine and many other detailed observances. Nevertheless so far as Christians and Jews were concerned, it is sufficient not to ally oneself with them by blood and one must not fight against them unless they give provocation. As for other people, it is the duty of every good Mussulman to attack, pursue and slay them if they do not embrace the religion of the Prophet.

These doctrines, these hopes and these threats were powerful springs of action which launched the Arabs, sword in hand, in every direction.

The Caliphate. The Sunnites and Shiites. Arab Conquests. (637-661).— Mohammed did not designate his successor, but Abou-Bekr, whom he had charged with pronouncing the formal prayer in his place, was recognized as caliph or religious, civil, and military chief (632). Abou-Bekr in turn designated Omar (634) and after Omar, Othman was elected (644), who was succeeded by Ali. The latter was the husband of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, and chief of the Fatimite party which gave birth to the great Mussulman sect

of the Shiites or Separatists. They regard Ali as having been unjustly excluded from the succession after the death of Mohammed. The Sunnites, or followers of tradition, recognize Abou-Bekr, Omar and Othman as legitimate. After Ali the hereditary system begins with the Ommiades (661).

This period is that of the great conquests. Khaled and Amrou by the victories of Aïznadin and the Yermouk wrested Syria from Heraclius, emperor of the East, who had just returned victorious from expeditions against Persia. In ten years' time the conquest of Persia was assured by the victories of Kadesiah, Jalula and Nehavend. Yezdegerd, the last of the Sassanides, in vain besought succor from the emperor of China. In 639 Amrou entered Egypt and made himself master of the country after besieging Alexandria fourteen months.

The Ommiades. — The usurpation of Moavia, chief of the Ommiades, who rendered the government a despotism and made Damascus his capital, was followed by civil dissensions. Blood flowed in streams for thirty years. The almost suspended movement of conquest began again about 691 under Abd-el-Malek. In the east, Transoxiana and Sogdiana were conquered and India was threatened. Though in the north Constantinople successfully resisted a seven years' siege (672-679), the Arab power was established in the west along the entire northern coast of Africa. Kairowan was founded, Carthage captured, a revolt of the Moors stifled and the Columns of Hercules passed by Tarik who gave them his name as the mountain of Tarik or Gibraltar. The Spanish Visigothic kingdom, weakened by ecclesiastical influence and given up to discord by its elective system of monarchy, succumbed at the battle of Xeres (711). Of all the peninsula the Christians retained only a corner of land in the Asturian mountains where Pelayo took refuge with his comrades. Carried on by their ardor the rapid conquerors crossed the Pyrenees, occupied Septimania, ravaged Aquitaine and were already marching upon Tours when Charles Martel arrested them by the victory of Poitiers or Tours (732).

Division of the Caliphate. — Thus the Arabs at a bound reached the Pyrenees and the Himalayas. Their faith was supreme over two thousand leagues of country. Nevertheless geography, the greatest of forces to support or destroy newborn states, condemned their empire to speedy partition

among many masters, because it was too extensive to have one centre and contained too many different peoples to possess unity. The diverse influences of locality and race soon began to manifest themselves and then to enter into conflict. The dynasties, representing this or that nationality, which geography and history had produced, began to dispute the throne with one another and as a natural result the empire fell to pieces.

In 750 the Syrian dynasty of the Ommiades was overthrown by Abul-Abbas, who founded the dynasty of the Abbassides, sprung from an uncle of Mohammed. A single Ommiad escaping proscription fled to Spain and there erected the Caliphate of the West or of Cordova (755). Thus the Abbassides now reigned only over the Caliphate of the East or of Bagdad, a new capital built upon the Tigris in 762 near the ancient Seleucia. There they furnished a succession of great men: Almanzor (754), Haroun-al-Raschid or the Just (786), Al-Mamoun (813); all of them patrons of letters, arts and science, which they had borrowed from the Greeks. But in those places which had always witnessed despotism and where the shade of the great kings still seemed to wander, the caliphs soon came to consider themselves the image of God on earth. A splendid court separated them from their people, immense wealth replaced the poverty of Omar and military ardor became extinct in the midst of an effeminate life. Then these men, ignorant how to fight, bought slaves to make soldiers of them, and the slaves became their masters. A guard of Seldjuk Turks was introduced into the palace. They filled it with disorder and violence and at their pleasure made or unmade sovereigns. The Abbassides fell into the condition of the French Sluggard Kings. Togrul Beg left to the caliph only an empty religious authority (1058) and founded the power of the Seldjuk Turks. In the ninth century Africa was detached from the Caliphate of Bagdad and divided up among three dynasties: the Edrissites at Fez, the Aglabites at Kairowan and the Fatimites at Cairo. The latter claimed descent from Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed.

As for the Caliphate of Cordova, like that of Cairo, it had its brilliant days. Many Christians being treated mildly mingled with the Mussulmans and formed the active population of the Mozarabis. The ever-skilful Jews were relieved from the rigors of the Visigothic law. Com-

merce, industry and agriculture flourished and afforded the caliphs great riches. Convulsed by the conquests of Charlemagne's lieutenants north of the Ebro, the Caliphate of Cordova was again shaken by the revolts of the valis, or provincial governors, and by the insurrection of the bandits, Beni-Hafsoun, which lasted for eighty years. The reigns of Abderrahman I (755), Hescham I (787), Al-Hakam I and Abderrahman II were very fortunate. That of Abderrahman III surpassed all the rest (912-961). The successes of this caliph and of Almanzor, the chief minister of Hescham II, arrested on the Douro and the Ebro the progress of the Christian kingdoms founded in the north. But after Almanzor everything fell to pieces. An African guard delivered the palace over to a sanguinary anarchy which favored the efforts of the valis at independence. In 1010 Murcia, Badajoz, Grenada, Saragossa, Valentia, Seville, Toledo, Carmona, Algesiras, were so many independent principalities. In 1031 Hescham, the descendant of the Omniades, was deposed and retired with joy into obscurity. Shortly after the very title of caliph disappeared.

Arabic Civilization.—Such was the fate of the empire of the Arabs in the three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe; a sudden and irresistible expansion, then division and a rapid general enfeeblement. But they had established their religion, their language and the laws of their Koran over a great number of peoples, and transmitted to the Europe of the Middle Ages industries and sciences of which they were, if not the inventors, at least the diffusers. While Europe was plunged in thick shades of barbarism, Bagdad, Bassorah, Samarcand, Damascus, Cairo, Kairowan, Fez, Grenada, Cordova, were so many great intellectual centres.

The Koran had determined the literary Arab language and it is preserved to our day just as Mohammed spoke it. Time and local influences have caused the vulgar tongue to undergo marked transformations. This Arabic, prodigiously rich in words which express the objects and impressions of the desert, nevertheless adapted itself to all the usages of literature and science. From the moribund school of Alexandria the Arabs had received Aristotle whom they zealously commented. More than once the commentators were themselves philosophers worthy of consideration. Such were in the East, Avicenna; in the West, Averroes,

who enjoyed fame in the Middle Ages because he had transmitted to the Christians of Europe the knowledge of the Stagirite.

The exact sciences received from Almanzor, the second of the Abbassides, a lively impulse, thanks to the learned men whom the caliphs attracted from Constantinople. As early as the first half of the ninth century two astronomers of Bagdad measured in the plain of Sennaar a degree of the meridian. Soon afterwards Euclid was expounded, Ptolemy's tables corrected, the obliquity of the ecliptic more exactly calculated, the precision of the equinoxes and the difference between the solar year and the common year better determined, new instruments of precision invented and at Samarcand an admirable observatory was founded. Still it is an error, though common, to attribute to the Arabs the invention of algebra and of the so-called Arabic figures which we use. Probably they only transmitted to Europe what they found in the learned school of Alexandria. We have from them in the same degree the compass and gunpowder. They excelled in medicine where again they were the pupils of the ancients, as was Averroes of Galen.

In architecture also they borrowed much from the Greeks. Their horseshoe arch belongs to the Byzantine style. They cultivated neither painting nor sculpture, because their religion forbade the representation of the human figure, but their arabesques are a form of ornamentation peculiar to themselves. The magnificent remains of this architecture can be seen at Cordova, Grenada and Cairo.

In agriculture and industry we have devised nothing superior to their system of irrigation, which the peasants of Valencia and Granada still practise. The reputation of the sword blades of Toledo, the silk of Grenada, the blue and green cloths of Cuenca, the harnesses, saddles and leather of Cordova, were celebrated throughout Europe. But this civilization like the empire in whose bosom it had blossomed disappeared almost as quickly as it was formed.