

early as 1169 we find representatives of the cities sitting in the Cortes of Castile; in 1295 the burgesses or commoners were definitely admitted to the English Parliament; in the fourteenth century they were associated as a third estate with the National Assembly of France; and in the fifteenth century they became a house of the German Diet.

Growth of
absolutism.

Thus everywhere may be observed the mounting importance of the cities. But every forward step they took meant a new loss for the nobility and by implication a new gain for the burghers' ally, the king. His power grew by leaps and bounds, until it became his ambition to free himself from every check. We shall see all sixteenth-century kings striving toward this goal, and we shall be obliged to acknowledge that this movement toward absolutism was, on the whole, beneficial to civilization, since only in this way could the feudal nobility be crushed, and the sharply separated classes of nobles, clergy, burghers, artisans, and peasants be welded into a single people. The kings supposed they were building only for themselves, but the subsequent development showed that they were really working in the interests of the nation.

CHAPTER II

THE EUROPEAN STATES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN PERIOD

The Empire.

REFERENCES: LODGE, *Close of the Middle Ages*, Chapter XVII.; BRYCE, *The Holy Roman Empire*, Chapter XVII.; HENDERSON, *A Short History of Germany*, Vol. I., Chapters VII., X.; *THE CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY*, Vol. I., Chapter IX.

THE Roman Empire, which at the birth of Christ embraced the whole civilized world, had lost its hold upon western Europe after the Teutonic migrations. However, on Christmas Day, 800 A.D., Charlemagne, king of the most powerful of the Teutonic tribes, the Franks, took the title Roman Emperor, and thus revived the traditions of the Empire in the west. Since the resuscitated Empire was dedicated to the advance of religion and closely leagued with the Church, it was presently designated as Holy. The struggle and decay of the Holy Roman Empire is one of the main themes of mediæval history. It consistently lost ground, both as against the Church and the subject-nationalities which it embraced, and at the beginning of the Modern Period had been practically reduced to the national state of Germany. By the year 1500, therefore, the words Empire and Germany have, to all intents and purposes, become interchangeable terms.

Decay of the
Holy Roman
Empire.

The Constitution of Germany.

The seven electors.

Growing weakness of the central authorities.

At the opening of the Modern Period Maximilian I. (1493-1519) of the House of Hapsburg was the head of the Holy Roman Empire. The family of Hapsburg had grown so powerful in the fifteenth century that the German crown had almost become its hereditary possession. Theoretically, however, the crown was still elective. On the death of an emperor a successor could be legally chosen only by the seven electors, who were the seven greatest princes of the realm. Of these seven electors three were ecclesiastical dignitaries and four were lay princes. The seven were: the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier (Treves), the king of Bohemia, the duke of Saxony, the margrave of Brandenburg, and the count palatine of the Rhine. The seven electors, the lesser princes (including the higher ecclesiastical dignitaries, such as bishops and abbots), and the free cities, meeting as three separate houses, composed the imperial Diet. This Diet was the legislative body of the Empire, and its consent was necessary to every important act. Emperor and Diet together constituted the imperial government, if machinery as rusty as that of the Empire had come to be may be given that name. In fact, the national government of Germany was little more than a glorious memory. Germany had not, like France, England, and Spain, advanced in the later Middle Ages toward national unity, but had steadily travelled in the opposite direction toward complete disintegration. The princes, margraves, counts, prince-bishops, and free cities, constituting the so-called "estates" of the mediæval feudal realm, were about three hundred in number. Some, like the seven electors, held territory large enough to command respect; others controlled at most a few square miles. Selfishly zealous to increase their local rights, they had acquired a constantly increasing independence of the central power, and had reduced the emperor to a puppet. It was plain that

if matters continued as in the past, even the name of unity would presently vanish, and Germany would be broken up into three hundred independent states.

The greatest interest attaching to Maximilian's reign is connected with the circumstance that under him the last serious attempt was made to reinvigorate the imperial government. In the latter half of the fifteenth century something like a wave of national enthusiasm swept over Germany. Voices were raised throughout the land for reform, and encouraged by these manifestations Maximilian and his Diet approached the task of national reorganization. Beginning with 1495 a number of Diets met and discussed the measures to be taken. The result was a miserable disappointment, for what was done did not strengthen materially the central authority, the emperor, but was limited to the internal security of the realm. The right of private warfare, the most insufferable survival of feudal times, was abolished, and a perpetual peace (*ewiger Landfrieden*) proclaimed. To enforce this peace there was instituted a special court of justice, the Imperial Chamber (*Reichskammergericht*), to which all conflicts between the estates of the realm had to be referred. Later, in order to insure the execution of the verdicts of the Imperial Chamber and for the greater safety of the realm against external and internal foes, the Empire was divided into ten administrative districts. This is the largest measure of reform which the local governments in control of the Diet would, out of jealousy of the central government, concede. The emperor was left, as before, without an income, without an administration, and without an army. Lacking these he could not enforce the decrees of the Diet or of the Imperial Chamber, and was no better than a graven image, draped, for merely scenic purposes, in the mantle of royalty. If we hear of powerful emperors in the future (Charles V., for instance),

The attempted reforms of Maximilian.

Abolition of right of private warfare.

The Imperial Chamber.

we shall discover that they owed their power, not to the Empire, but always to the strength which they derived from their hereditary lands. In their hereditary lands they were, what they could never be in the Empire, effective masters.

Maximilian, who fell under the spell of the new culture influences of the Renaissance, was a strange mixture of modern and mediæval elements. He was much buffeted about by fortune, largely because he was simple-hearted enough to take the Empire and its threadbare splendors seriously. He tried to make good the ancient imperial claims to parts of Italy, and met with defeat and derision; he tried to unite Europe against the Turks, who had overrun the east and were moving westward up the Danube, but he could not even influence his own Germans to a national war of defence. However, a number of lucky matrimonial alliances compensated Maximilian for his many political disappointments. In the year 1477 he married Mary of Burgundy, the only child of Charles the Bold and heiress of the Netherlands; and in 1496 his son Philip was united to Joan of Castile, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella and heir-apparent to the crown of Spain. As Philip died in 1506 and Joan shortly after became insane, their son Charles was proclaimed, first, sovereign of the Netherlands, and later, on the death of Ferdinand (1516), king of Spain. Finally, when the Emperor Maximilian died (1519), Charles fell heir also to the Austrian lands, and soon after was elected to succeed his grandfather in the Empire. The new emperor adopted the title of Charles V.¹ To recount his astonishing position: he was lord of the Netherlands, king of Spain and her dependencies in Europe and beyond the seas, archduke of Austria—all this in his own right—whereto had been added

The Hapsburg marriages.

The dominion of Charles V.

¹ As king of Spain he is Charles I. For his descent see Genealogical Tables I. and II.

by election the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. Unluckily for Charles V. there had, just before Maximilian's death, broken out the great Church schism, called the Reformation. Little as Charles suspected it at first, the Reformation was destined to become the most significant event of his reign.

Italy.

REFERENCES: SYMONDS, Renaissance in Italy, especially the volume entitled Age of the Despots; EWART, Cosimo de' Medici; ARMSTRONG, Lorenzo de' Medici; VILLARI, Life and Times of Savonarola; VILLARI, Life and Times of Machiavelli; HORATIO F. BROWN, Venice; CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY, Vol. I., Chapter IV. (invasions of Italy), V. and VI. (Florence), VII. (Rome), VIII. (Venice).

Italy at the end of the Middle Ages had fallen into worse confusion than Germany, for the country possessed not even that semblance of national unity, still maintained in Germany. There were in the peninsula five leading states: the duchy of Milan, the republic of Venice, the republic of Florence, the states of the Church, and the kingdom of Naples. The numerous small states, like Savoy and Ferrara, were too inconsiderable to play much of a political rôle.

During the fifteenth century the five leading states had been constantly engaged in wars among themselves. These wars did no great harm until it occurred to the kings of Spain and France to turn the local divisions of Italy to their personal advantage. Spain, or rather Aragon, at the end of the fifteenth century already possessed the islands of Sardinia and Sicily, and its royal house was closely related to the ruling family of Naples. Through these connections Spain acquired an active interest in Italian affairs. Unfortunately for Italy, France also became interested in Italian affairs when in 1481 the last member of the House of Anjou died,

The five leading states.

Spain and France become interested in Italy.

Charles VIII.
of France
invades
Italy, 1494.

leaving all his possessions and claims to his near relative, the king of France. Among the claims was one to the kingdom of Naples, handed down from an earlier representative of the line. Charles VIII. of France resolved on his accession to power to make good this claim upon Naples by force, and in 1494 he made his famous invasion of Italy. It was the first foreign interference in the affairs of the peninsula since the beginning of the Renaissance, and became the prelude to Italy's decay and enslavement. Spain, unwilling to permit the extension of France, looked upon Charles's step as a challenge, and inaugurated a struggle for the possession of Italy which lasted for over fifty years and ended in her complete victory. At the beginning of our period this result was not yet apparent. But within a few years after the outbreak of the French-Spanish wars the states of Italy, overrun and plundered by superior forces, commenced to exhibit material alterations in their political status. Let us take a closer view of these Italian states.

Naples.—If Naples, as it was the first, had remained the only, source of quarrel between France and Spain, peace might soon have been reestablished. For, after having been traversed again and again by French and Spanish troops, the kingdom of Naples was definitely ceded by France to Spain (1504). As the southern part of the Italian mainland had for some time been designated in current use as Sicily, Ferdinand of Aragon, already lord of the island of Sicily, henceforth adopted the style of king of The Two Sicilies. Unfortunately, a second bone of contention between the two great western monarchies was found in the duchy of Milan.

Naples ac-
quired by
Spain, 1504.

Struggle be-
tween France
and Spain for
the posses-
sion of Milan.

Milan.—The duchy of Milan was legally a fief of the Holy Roman Empire, but was held at this time in practically independent possession by the family of a successful military adventurer of the name of Sforza. When Charles VIII. of



France died in 1498 Louis XII., his successor, remembered that he was a descendant, in the female line, of a family, the Visconti, who had ruled in Milan before the Sforza family had become established. On the strength of this vague priority Louis resolved to supplant the Sforza upstart. Having invaded and conquered Milan in 1499, he held that city successfully until there was formed against him the Holy League, composed of the Pope, Venice, Spain, and England (1512). The Holy League quickly succeeded in driving the French out of Italy and in reinstating the Sforza family in their duchy. Louis XII. died in 1515 without having reconquered Milan, but his successor, Francis I., immediately upon his accession marched his army off to Italy. Charles VIII. had taken Naples and lost it again, Louis XII. had seized Milan only to be dispossessed, and now Francis I., as brimming with ambition as his predecessors, made a third assault on the peninsula. A brilliant victory at Marignano (1515), which delivered Milan into his hands, seemed to justify his step. For a short time now there was peace between France and Spain; but naturally the Spaniards saw with envy the extension of French influence over the north of Italy, and when Charles, king of Spain, was elected emperor in 1519 the necessary pretext for renewing the war with France was given into their hands. It has already been said that Milan was legally a fief of the Empire. In his capacity of emperor, Charles could find a ready justification for interfering in the affairs of his dependency. Immediately upon his election he resolved to challenge the right of the French to Milan, and so the French-Spanish wars in Italy were renewed.

Venice.—In the fifteenth century Venice was the strongest of all the Italian states. She called herself a republic, but was more truly an oligarchy, the power lying in the hands of the nobles, who composed the Great Council, controlled

Louis XII.
conquers
Milan, 1499

Francis I.
again con-
quers Milan,
1515.

The splendid
position of
Venice.

the administration, and elected the chief dignitary, the doge or duke. The power of Venice was due to her immense trade and possessions in the eastern Mediterranean. The Crusades had opened her eyes to the resources of this region, and she had gradually taken possession of the Morea (Peloponnesus), Candia, Cyprus, and most of the islands of the Ægean and Ionian seas. In addition to these colonial territories she held the whole northeastern portion of Italy.

The decay
of Venice.

The Renaissance is the period of Venetian glory; at the beginning of the Modern Period that glory was already rapidly waning. The first check to the continued prosperity of Venice was given by the Turks. Having begun their irresistible march through western Asia and eastern Europe, they wrenched from Venice, bit by bit, her Oriental trade and possessions. The second misfortune which befell the city of the lagoons was the discovery by Vasco da Gama of the sea-passage to India around the Cape of Good Hope. This discovery, by drawing off the Oriental commerce to the states of the Atlantic seaboard, struck a fatal blow at Venetian prosperity. And to these reverses in the east were added disasters in the west. Partly owing to her wealth, partly owing to her selfish policy, Venice had aroused the jealousy and hatred of her many neighbors, who finally agreed to lower her pride. In 1508 the emperor, the Pope, France, and Spain, formed against her the formidable League of Cambray. Although she managed by timely concessions to save herself from the noose which had been flung about her neck, she never again recovered her former prestige. She declined gradually during the whole Modern Period, but even in her decay remained one of the main bulwarks of Europe against the encroachments of the Turks. Finally, Napoleon made an end of her existence as an independent state in the year 1797.

Florence.—The republic of Florence, far-famed in the

period of the Renaissance for its great artists and writers, had in the fifteenth century fallen under the domination of a native family, the Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent, the greatest of the line, ruled from 1469 to 1492). The Medici did not greatly alter the republican forms, but by means of a clever political "ring" controlled the public offices. Against this concealed tyranny the people continued to protest in their hearts. When, therefore, the invasion of Charles VIII. (1494) offered a chance to cast off the Medicean yoke, the people rose, banished their tyrants, and reëstablished the republic. Girolamo Savonarola, a pure-minded, resolute, and devoted Dominican friar, who had through his stirring invectives against the general corruption of manners acquired a great following, became the popular hero and leader. For four years he exercised great influence in the government and labored ceaselessly at the reform of the morals of his wayward flock. During the period of Savonarola's supremacy Florence presented to her astonished contemporaries, who dwelt upon the free heights of the pagan Renaissance, the picture of a city dominated by a priestly faction. But in 1498 Savonarola's enemies compassed his overthrow and burned him at the stake. For a few more years the republic went on as best it could, until in 1512 the Medici reconquered the city. In 1527 the Florentines made a second and last attempt to regain their liberties. Again they cast the Medici out, but again the banished princes returned, this time (1529) with the help of Charles V., who now honored the head of the Medicean House, Alexander, by conferring upon him and his heirs Florence and her territory, under the name of the duchy (later the grand duchy) of Tuscany. Thus by a policy of sly and persistent encroachment the Medici became the hereditary rulers of their native city.

Florence sub-
jected to the
Medici.

Savonarola.

The return of
the Medici.

The States of the Church.—During the period of the Renaissance the Popes, influenced by pagan ideas like the