

CHAPTER XLV

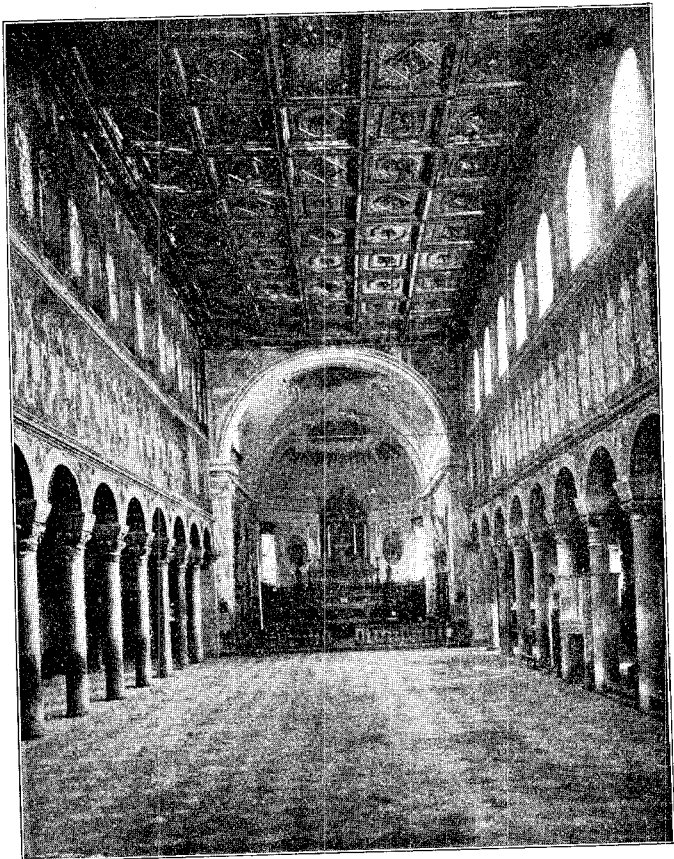
THE NEW GERMAN STATES

476-774 A.D.

569. The Condition of Europe (476 A.D.). — At the time when the line of emperors in Italy ceased, the entire West was still in chaos. In Gaul and Spain the Burgundians, and more especially the Visigoths, were making some progress toward settled life and orderly government. The Vandals of Africa remained more barbarous, while in Northern Gaul the Franks were still pagan, little touched by the civilization of Rome. The Angles and the Saxons, who were already invading Britain, and of whom we have yet to hear, were not only pagans, but wholly ignorant of Roman ways of life. Italy, as we have seen, continued Roman till Odoacer quartered his German soldiers on her land. Under these circumstances it is easy to understand why all the West was in confusion and conflict, — each invading race against the other, German against Roman, pagan against Christian, and Arian against Catholic. We shall now see how chaos gradually gave way to order, and how the various conflicting forces finally harmonized in one civilization, one religion, and one empire.

Extending along the ancient frontier on the north, just outside the empire, a line of barbarous races pressed upon the heels of their kinsmen who had crossed the border. On the shore of the North Sea between the Rhine and the Elbe were the Frisians, farther south the Thuringians and the Alemanni. Eastward along the Danube were the Rugians, Lombards, and Gepids in order, and beyond were the Slavs. "All these tribes, like their brethren who had gone before them, were showing a general tendency to press west and south, and take their share in the plunder of the dismembered empire." — Oman, *European History*, p. 6.

570. The Ostrogoths; Theodoric the Great (476-526 A.D.). — The first of the great forces which helped bring about this change was the East-Gothic nation. When Attila died, it threw off the



CHURCH OF SAN APOLLINARE NUOVO, RAVENNA
(Built by Theodoric)

Hunnish yoke,¹ and settled in Moesia as an ally of the emperor at Constantinople. Between these barbarians and the emperor there was much trouble, which ended in their migration to Italy.

The leader of the movement was Theodoric, known as the great,

¹ §§ 557, 565.

the ablest and most statesmanlike of all the German chieftains whom we have thus far met. He brought his entire nation, women and children as well as warriors, over the Alps, and fought three



battles with Odoacer. After conquering his opponent, he put him to death, and then proceeded to quarter his troops on the lands of Italy.

Here his violence ceased; the conqueror became the statesman. His just laws, borrowed from the Roman code, reconciled the native Italians to their new German neighbors. With remarkable tact he adapted himself to his new position as king of Italy. Though he could neither read nor write, he encouraged education; a barbarian,

he yet appreciated the value of Roman law and civilization; an Arian, he tolerated the orthodox Catholics. In this way he aimed to reduce the various classes of his subjects to order and harmony. Under him Italy was secure from invasion, and more prosperous than she had been for centuries. The great cities could now repair their decayed public works and erect new ones. Among the king's buildings in Ra-ven'na, his capital, was a beautiful church in the style of a basilica, which is still standing.

His influence was felt outside of Italy: on the one hand, he continued subject in name to the emperor in Constantinople; on the other, he connected himself by marriages of his relatives with most of the German kings of the West. By such means he brought the warring races of the broken empire into some degree of friendly relation, which crudely foreshadowed the present state-system of Europe.

In his later years, however, there were intrigues to rid Italy of the Goths and to bring the country under the emperor. This trouble led Theodoric to put to death on a charge of conspiracy the two most eminent men of his court, — Bo-e'thi-us, the renowned philosopher, and Sym'ma-chus, also a noted scholar. Suspecting the pope of disloyalty, the king threw him into prison, where he soon died. Theodoric himself did not long survive his victims. Thus a glorious reign ended in sadness; and no one after Theodoric was able to carry on his great work.

571. Justinian (527-565 A.D.); **his Wars.** — In the year after Theodoric's death Jus-tin'i-an became emperor at Constantinople. Though his ancestors were rude peasants, he received, in addition to great natural ability, the best education which the Eastern capital afforded.

His ambition was "to restore the grandeur of the empire" by legislation, by great public works, and especially by conquering the German kingdoms of the West. He had the rare faculty of choosing the most competent person for each special service. In Beli-sa'ri-us the emperor found a commander of remarkable genius, well qualified to lead in the work of conquest. This general subdued the Vandals of Africa in one short campaign (533-534 A.D.); for after the death of Gaiseric they had declined, and the Romans

of that country welcomed the army of the East as a deliverer from oppression.

Next year Belisarius attacked the Ostrogothic kingdom, which included Sicily as well as Italy. He met with little opposition till he had entered Rome. There the Goths besieged him for a year; meantime Wit'i-gis, their king, cut off the water supply, so that Rome lacked pure water till some of the aqueducts were restored a thousand years afterward. When the siege was at length raised, Belisarius, on his part, found it difficult to take the strong cities of northern Italy. By negotiation, however, he finally secured possession of the king and of the entire country. As the Roman rule was oppressive, the Goths immediately revolted; but after a long, fierce struggle (540-553 A.D.) the remnant of their number bade farewell to Italy and dispersed among various barbarian tribes. The peninsula came wholly under the emperor, and was governed for him by an officer termed *ex'arch*, whose capital was Ravenna. Still later, Justinian gained a foothold in southeastern Spain, but failed to conquer the entire West-Gothic kingdom.

While the emperor was subduing Italy, he was struggling to protect the empire from the Persians, who were as mighty as ever. More than once he had to purchase peace by the payment of tribute. It was well for Europe, however, that he was able to accomplish even that; and we should never lose sight of the fact that the German nations were free to work out the destiny of the continent only because the empire formed their bulwark against the powers of Asia.

572. Justinian's Internal Improvements.—Like the earlier Roman emperors, Justinian was a great builder of roads, fortifications, aqueducts, and other public works. The most splendid of his many churches was the dome-covered cathedral of St. Sophia—now a Mohammedan mosque. In his reign two Christian missionaries brought eggs of the silkworm from China to Constantinople, and taught the Europeans the culture of silk. Agriculture, commerce, and the skilled industries still flourished throughout the empire; but the produce went to support the oppressive Church, State, and army. Justinian is most noted, however, as the emperor who finally codified the Roman law. Under his authority *Tri-bo'ni-an*, an

eminent jurist, aided by several associates, drew up first the *Code*, containing twelve books of statutes, and second the *Digest*, which summarized the legal decisions of all the most learned lawyers. To these they added a third work, the *Institutes*, a treatise on the principles of law for the use of students. These writings together



ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE
(From a photograph)

form the Civil Law, the most precious gift of Rome to the modern world.

In Justinian we find another factor which made for law and order throughout the world. Especially his conquests brought the Western nations into closer contact with Roman civilization, and further impressed upon the minds of the Germans that they, too, were included in the empire.

573. The Lombards in Italy (568-774 A.D.). — The rule of the emperors, however, was financially too burdensome to be long endured in Italy. For twelve years after its conquest the peninsula was governed by Nar'ses, an ambitious man, whose public improvements weighed heavily upon the taxpayers. Then came

the invasion of the Lombards. Though warlike, they seem to have been few, so that they never succeeded in conquering the whole country. Their capital was Pavia; and the district they held in the Po Valley still bears the name of Lombardy. In addition, they occupied a territory in central Italy northeast of Rome, and another in the south of the peninsula.

Lacking a strong central government, the Lombards soon divided into a number of duchies, whose dukes were constantly fighting against one another, against the king, — when they had one, — and against the still unconquered districts. The Italians feared and hated them, for they were harsher and more barbarous than the Goths had been; in fact, it was but slowly that they gained some degree of Roman refinement.

Meantime their occupation of Italy had a far-reaching effect upon the history of the peninsula and of Europe. Their possessions were so distributed as to leave the unconquered territory cut up into duchies of varying size, with scarcely any means of communication with one another. Though these duchies still looked to the emperor as their sovereign, most of them were practically independent. Thus the Lombard invasion destroyed the unity of Italy. It is only in recent years that Italy has again become completely united.

574. The Anglo-Saxons in Britain (beginning 449 A.D.). — It is now necessary to learn something of the conquest of Britain by the Angles and the Saxons. Though Roman civilization and Christianity took no deep hold upon this island, the yoke of Rome had made the Celtic population weak and unwarlike. Hence, when Honorius recalled his troops from Britain (411 A.D.), the inhabitants of that part which had been subject to Rome could not defend themselves against the barbarians who assailed them on every side. Scots from Ireland, Picts from Scotland, and Jute and Saxon pirates grievously distressed them, and threatened, in fact, to overrun the whole country. At length they called upon the Jutes, a German tribe, to help them against the Picts. The defenders became conquerors; and their example was followed by their more numerous kinsmen, the Angles and the Saxons, who in time subdued and settled all the Romanized part of the island. The Britons who survived were pushed back or reduced to serfdom, so that

little trace of them is left in the England which resulted from the conquest; on the other hand, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland remained Celtic. The leaders of the invading bands became kings, each of the small district he had subdued. In time arose seven states, — the so-called Heptarchy, — which finally united in one kingdom.

As the Angles and the Saxons, before the conquest, had lived in northern Germany, far away from the empire, they knew nothing of Christianity or of Roman civilization. Under them, therefore, Britain again became barbarous and pagan. The invaders brought to their new home the manners and institutions which had been theirs in the fatherland, and from which the English people of to-day have derived their government and law, little influenced by Rome. As to the religion of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, the case was quite different. Pope Gregory the Great sent them missionaries, and others came to them from Ireland, which had already been Christianized. As there was some difference between the Irish and Roman churches, strife ensued, in which Rome at length triumphed; so that England became subject to the Roman church, acknowledging the pope as her supreme spiritual authority. It was no little gain to the cause of peace and civilization that when Britain was forever broken from the empire, religion reunited it to Rome.

Suggestive Questions

1. Write a summary of this chapter like that on p. 444.
2. State what progress was made in this period in the reestablishment of order and system.
3. What is the importance of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain?
4. Why were not the barbarians assimilated to the natives of Britain, as in other parts of the empire?
5. What elements of Roman government and society survived to the time of Charlemagne, and what elements were introduced by the Germans? What is the relative importance of these two classes of elements in mediæval life?

Note-book Topic

The Year 476 A.D. — Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, xxxvi (near end); Emerton, *Introduction to the Middle Ages*, ch. vi. § 1; Oman, *Europe, 476-918*, ch. 1; Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, bk. iii. ch. v. Earlier writers, as Gibbon, attach greater importance to the date than is warranted by the scholarship of to-day.

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