

personal rule. The wheels of government would revolve smoothly only as long as the king was vigilant and strong.

Charlemagne was not only a great conqueror but also an efficient administrator and farsighted statesman. The various countries he conquered were consolidated and brought under good and stable rule. The capital was Aachen (Aix la Chapelle).

Practical Minded: He believed in absolute power and not in idealistic dreams and utopian principles. He carefully studied the problems of his vast empire, and concluded that his authority needed the support of military forces, the co-operation of the nobles and the sanction of the Christian Church. He did not always do what was theoretically the best, but what he regarded as expedient and practical. In governing over his farflung empire, he sagaciously combined the toughness of his grand-father Charles Martel and the wisdom of his father Pepin III.

He protected his empire from aggression from without and revolts from within. He established peace and order, and promoted the material and moral welfare of his subjects.

No Standing Army: He found that a standing army was far beyond his resources, and so for defending his empire he threw the responsibility on his counts, over whom he exercised vigilant supervision. While he did not compel all and sundry to bear arms, he asked every free-man who owned property above a certain size to provide himself with military equipment and be ready to fight under his count whenever he called for an army.

Administrative Barons: The emperor saw that he had the unflinching co-operation of the nobles and the clergy, and carried on the administration with the help of the administrative barons, the Seneschal or chief of the palace, the Count Palatine or the chief justice, the Palsgraves or the judges of the palace court, a large number of learned men, clerks and servants. He did not concentrate all power in his own hands, but left much power in the hands of the counts and gave considerable scope for local self-government.

Counties: For administrative convenience, he divided his empire into counties. In each county, a Count was put in charge of secular affairs and Bishop or Archbishop in charge of spiritual affairs. The problem-ridden frontier or marches were placed under the control of special Governors. He carefully selected the Counts and Bishops, and devised ways and means to see that they did not entertain the great ambition of becoming independent rulers.

Assemblies: Charlemagne held periodical assemblies of arm-

ed nobles and property-owners in the open air at Aachen, Worms, Valenciennes, Paderborn and Geneva. At these meetings the nobles and the higher clergy were expected to report to him about the important happenings like revolts in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The king's officers following the custom of ancient Rome called the leading citizens for conducting an inquiry into taxable wealth, the law and order situation, and other important matters.

Missi Dominici: To ensure that administration was carried on efficiently and honestly, and to bring to book disobedient and corrupt officials, Charlemagne sent special touring officials known as Missi Dominici to the various parts of the empire. They usually travelled together in pairs. One of them was a clergy-man and the other a layman, a Bishop and a Count. They conveyed to the local officials the orders of the king, reviewed their actions, entertained complaints, hunted down robbers, reported on the morals of the clergy, protected people from corruption and highhandedness, gave relief to the poor, and shielded the people from general tyranny. Their main duty was to inspect the administration in the church and in the state.

Capitularies: He issued special decrees or laws called Capitularies based on Christian principles and German traditions. The sixty-five Capitularies that have survived deal with agriculture, industry, finance, money-lending and usury, education, religion, slavery and morality. These superseding the local laws brought about uniformity in administration.

Poor Relief: He showed special concern for the poor and made provision for poor relief, for which nobles and the clergy were taxed. At the same time beggary was made a crime.

Trade and Commerce: Steps were taken to encourage trade and commerce. Reforms were made for the protection of fairs, regulation of prices, weights and measures, collection of tolls, checking of speculation in futures, and stability of currency. Roads and bridges were constructed and well maintained, and water-ways were thrown open to commerce. A bridge was built on the Rhine at Mainze, and a plan was made to build a canal between the Rhine and the Danube, which would link the North Sea with the Black Sea.

Harun Al Rashid: Good relations were maintained with other states. Charlemagne and Caliph Harun al Rashid, the greatest Caliph of Baghdad, were on friendly terms, and they exchanged letters and gifts.

We cannot judge Charlemagne's administration by modern

standards. He did not maintain a standing army and evolved no system of general taxation. He did not codify laws like Justinian. As the conquered peoples were left under their own laws and institutions, there was no uniformity of laws and the administration of justice was difficult.

D. EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

As regards educational reforms of Charles, historians in exaggeration speak of Carolingian Renaissance.

Efforts to Learn: Charlemagne took as much interest in education as he took in conquests, and established schools all over the empire. He himself was not highly educated, but put forth special efforts to learn Latin, German grammar, German poetry, dialectic and astronomy. Einhard, his secretary, mentions that he took so much interest in learning to write that he kept tablets under his pillow so that they might be useful during any possible leisure. But his great efforts to write in advancing age did not yield very good results.

He loved subjects like geography, astronomy and history.

Help of Scholars: Illiteracy was repulsive to him, and efforts were made to spread education among the people and the lower clergy. He loved the company of scholars and invited foreign scholars to organize schools and revive the learning of France. King Offa of Mercia in England had sent the great scholar Alcuin of York (735-804) on a mission to Charlemagne, who requested and tempted him to stay at his court. He also requested Paul, the Deacon of the monastery of Monte Cassino, to stay and help him in the field of education. Both these eminent teachers were employed in the royal palace school organized by Charlemagne at Aachen. Other teachers who helped him were Peter of Pisa and Theodolphus of Spain. The emperor tried to have more teachers and collect a large number of books. The palace school became an active centre of learning, where much interest was shown in studies, and in the revision and copying of manuscripts. The students of the school included the emperor himself, his queen Liutgard, his daughter Gisela, his sons, and Einhard.

School at Tours: Alcuin was appointed Abbot of Tours (796) after he had served for eight years in the palace school. The great school at Tours served as a model for the other schools in the empire. Under his guidance, monks were encouraged to be more learned and to take out better and more precise copies of the *Vulgate*

of Jerome and the Latin Fathers and of the Latin classics. The labours of these scholarly monks preserved for prosperity the valuable manuscripts of the ancient times.

Capitularies on Education: One of the Capitularies of Charlemagne was on the spread of learning. Issued in 787 it called upon the clergy to take interest in learning and reprimanded those who used coarse and uncultured language. Every cathedral and monastery was to establish schools for the benefit of the clergy and laymen, and subjects like grammar, music and arithmetic were to be taught. Another Capitulary ordered that sons of free-men and serfs were to sit on the same bench in the elementary schools, and they should be treated equally. The emperor took interest in science and issued a Capitulary in favour of medical education. According to the contemporary standards, the schools did well. It may be noted here that in his keen interest in spreading education everywhere in his empire, Charlemagne sowed seeds of the future universities and centres of learning in Europe.

Personal Interest: Charlemagne himself went round to take personal interest in educational activities and be sure that schools were run properly and students diligently studied in them. He visited schools, spoke appreciatively about industrious boys and reprimanded the lazy ones who neglected their studies. While giving a bit of his mind, on one occasion, he said to the sons of nobles: "You have neglected the study of literature, while you have given yourself to luxury and idleness....By the Kingdom of Heaven, I care nothing for your noble birth and handsome faces, let others prize them as they may."

In a big empire rampant with illiteracy, Charlemagne's efforts brought about an intellectual revival.

Obstacles: Learning had several obstacles. Printing was not known, and manuscripts had to be laboriously copied at places called *Scriptoria*, which were generally located in monasteries. Another great drawback in the field of learning was the religious colour education had. This was because learned men were generally clergymen. The chief aim of learning was to know Latin, the language of the *Bible* and of the church. Little effort was made to serve the secular learning of classical Greece and Rome.

E. ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Religion served as a motivating force to encourage art and architecture. Charlemagne as a Christian king built many churches,

monasteries and cathedrals for the spread of Christianity and Christian culture

Italian Architects: Charlemagne patronised architecture, and employed several Italian architects. He built churches, cathedrals, monastic schools and bridges, and developed Romanesque architecture.

The construction of many of the great buildings of Charlemagne were perhaps planned and supervised by Einhard. At Ingelheim and Nijmegen palaces were constructed. At Aachen a great palace and chapel were built. These survived for a millennium, and only the bombing during the Second World War (1939-1945), could destroy them. These structures bore the influence of Byzantine and Syrian styles.

Music: He loved music, and was an amateur of church music.

F. CHARLEMAGNE AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The Church basked in the sunshine of Charlemagne's rule. The birth of the so-called Holy Roman Empire was one of the most significant events of his time. In fact it was the greatest event of his life.

Champion of Christianity: Charlemagne, an enthusiastic and powerful champion of Christianity, wished to bring the whole of Europe into the Christian fold. He had the zeal of a missionary and did not mind using ruthless methods to spread it. When the Saxons were conquered, he held two alternatives before them: baptism and death. After beheading 4,500 Saxons in one day, he went to Thionville for the celebration of Christmas.

City of God: He wished to establish a Christian empire answering to the description of the ideal Christian kingdom depicted in *The City of God* by St. Augustine.

Help: He had sympathy for Christians, and sent money to needy Christians in foreign countries.

Master of Church: While he generously helped the Church, he jealously guarded his power and wished to be the master of the church. He kept a vigilant eye on the Pope and the clergy and issued directives to them. He took steps to uphold authority in churches and monasteries and put down laxity and immorality.

Crowning of Charles: An event of extraordinary importance was the crowning of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor. This was a climax of the great mutual support and cooperation between

the emperor and Pope Leo III. Both needed each other for upholding their power and prestige. The Pope would have lost his power without Charlemagne's support, and Charlemagne could not have won the obedience and loyalty of his Christian subjects without the strong support and blessings of the Church.

The Roman people did not like Leo III, who became Pope on December 26, 795. They levelled serious charges of simony, adultery and perjury against him and on April 25, 799 they imprisoned him in a monastery. Leo escaped, fled over the Alps to Germany and begged the protection of Charlemagne at Paderborn. On the Pope denying the allegations against him on solemn oath, Charlemagne, who went to Rome on November 24, 800, absolved him of the charges.

Charlemagne celebrated Christmas in Rome in 800. On the Christmas day in 800, as the emperor was praying before St. Peter's altar at the solemn mass, Pope Leo III, who wanted to show his gratitude to him sprang a surprise by suddenly placing on the emperor's head a jewelled crown and proclaiming him Holy Roman Emperor. At this dramatised coronation, as instructed earlier, the congregation consisting of clergy, Franks and Romans shouted in joyous approval. "Hail Charles the Augustus, crowned by God the great and peace-bringing Emperor of the Romans." The Pope hailed him as Emperor and Augustus and gave him homage. Such homage was given only to the Byzantine emperor since 476, when Rome fell into barbarian hands. The Holy Roman empire in which the church and state were partners took birth.

Significance of Coronation: The crowning of Charlemagne had tremendous religious and symbolic value. It cemented the Church-State friendship and created an era of peace and stability; but at the same time it sowed the seed of great conflict between the so-called Holy Roman Emperors and the Popes. Some of the future Popes felt and clearly proclaimed that they were more powerful than the Emperors and that spiritual power was higher than the temporal. They claimed for the Church a place higher than the State. It was argued that if the Pope had the authority to crown the Emperor, he had also the authority to withhold the crown from him. The king himself was unhappy about the coronation, and he said to Einhard that he would not have come to the church had he known about the Pope's plan. He was fully aware of the implication that the Pope, who crowned him, was superior to him. It was the first time that an emperor was crowned by a Pope.

Holy Roman Emperor: The title *Holy Roman Emperor* was incorrect. It was a myth, as Charlemagne's empire was neither holy nor Roman. The empire had no holy purpose, and was not theocratic in character. Perhaps, the word *holy* was used to distinguish it from the true Roman empire. It was not Roman, as it was not connected with ancient Rome.

The immediate effect of the coronation was favourable to Charlemagne, as he was hailed as the protector and guardian of the Christian faith. Many subjects, who doubted the basis of his authority now accepted his power as legal.

As far as Charlemagne was concerned, he continued to dominate over the church, and nothing could reduce his authority. The danger to king's power arose only in the future.

Effect on Byzantium: The coronation had an adverse effect on the Byzantine empire. It put an end to the political suzerainty of the Byzantine empire over the Pope. Charlemagne in the eyes of the Eastern Roman emperor was nothing but a usurper of his power. It also marked the final step in separating the Byzantine empire from Rome.

G. ESTIMATE OF CHARLEMAGNE

Charlemagne, the greatest European monarch in the 8th century, was an indefatigable general, wise and benevolent ruler, patron of learning and art, and practical and farsighted statesman. He was a maker of history. As a writer has remarked: "He stands at the end of one age, and at the beginning of another, and what he did was the foundation of all the future history of Europe." When he rose as a great monarch after Europe had witnessed terrible destruction by barbarians, people regarded him as a beacon light. It was owing to him that the dark clouds of barbarian anarchy began to clear, and Europe could once again go back to the track of civilization and culture. He had all the physical and mental qualities to rule over a great empire. His great stature was proved after his death, when none of his successors could hold the various parts of his realm. Obviously they were pigmies before him.

Like King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, he and his knights, Roland and Oliver, became famous in Romantic literature.

However, he had his drawbacks. At times he was inordinately cruel. The ruthless methods he adopted to propagate Christianity, the religion of Jesus, the Prince of Peace tarnished his name. His

morals were low even according to the standard of his days, and his court was connected with several scandals. But his moral lapses did not interfere in his political and military affairs.

After Charlemagne: Two of the three sons of Charlemagne died during his life time, Pepin in 810 and Charles in 811. The throne went to Louis, who was kind and generous. Being too good, Louis, who earned the epithet *Pious*, was unable to maintain the integrity of his empire. After his death, civil war broke out among his sons, and by the Treaty of Verdun in 843 the empire was divided into three parts: France, Germany and Italy.

The empire was plagued by Muslims, who captured Sicily and raided Italy and France. The Slavs, the Hungarians and the other peoples brought disruption and anarchy. Among free-booters, the Vikings or the pirates of Denmark and Sweden were the worst. In this disorder, feudalism rose.

The death of Charlemagne did not end the Holy Roman Empire. Its myth continued for a thousand years with many ups and downs.

feudalism and to lift the people out of darkness and savagery."

(ii) FEUDALISM

Feudalism was regarded as one of the most complicated developments of the middle ages. This system passed through various stages prior to its downfall. The period between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries was known in European history as the Feudal Age.

There is no unanimous opinion regarding the origin of feudalism, it originated in the dark age. According to one opinion it was the 'rude offspring of anarchy.' It is argued that the attack of the Barbarians on the more settled part of Europe necessitated the organisation of an effective defence by the people of each locality as there was no strong central power that could push back the invaders. The result of such improvisation was the political, economic and the social system called by the name of feudalism. To put it differently, the continual shocks of war led to the development of Feudalism. It was mainly a military system to render easy defence and collection of armies.

Features of Feudalism: Feudalism was founded on two fundamental ideals: 1. that every man must have a Lord or suzerain who protects him and whom in turn he serves, 2. that the holding of land is the basis of all political and social relationships. The poor peasants in the districts or region sought protection of the rich landlords and in this manner feudal ties were established. They formed a part of a contract between the noblemen and the peasants. The peasants agreed to perform personal services of the suzerain who in return guaranteed them protection. Feudalism had very great complicated political, economic and social features and they influenced the lives in all its aspects.

Fief: The land held by the vassal from a lord was called at first a "benefice" and when this became hereditary it was called a fief. There were many grades in the feudal hierarchy, beginning with the king who was the ultimate owner of all the land held by the community. He was the supreme lord, under God. These fiefs were subdivided among his companions and the heads of the great families i.e., the

barons or Knights. They were the vassals of great nobles and landlords styled variously as dukes or counts or earls, or margraves. The process of sub-infeudation might thus go on until one reached the stage of minute parcels of land or miniature fiefs.

A feudal contract between lord and vassal involved duties for both. In fact many were the links in the chain of feudal allegiance and at every stage vassal and overlord were bound to each other by mutual obligations and rights. For instance, the nobles who received land from the King were required in return for their land to pay him homage by kneeling before his lord with his hands between his lord's hands. This was a sign of loyalty and respect and the acknowledgement of service owed. They had to supply troops in war time and to do military service for a certain number of days in a year. The King was bound to consult them collectively in all matters of importance.

The sub-tenants who received land from the nobles were required to do homage to their lords and to pay him service by raising his own share of troops which their Lords had to supply to the King. The lowest class of vassals—the agricultural labourers and small tenant-farmers—in addition to performing specified personal services had to give a certain percentage of their crops to their lords.

The conquered people occupied the lowest strata of the feudal structure. In fact, they had no real place in the feudal system as they were landless. They were serfs or land slaves. The serfs spent their lives on one estate and served their master by unpaid labour on his lands. In return for these services they received a patch of land to cultivate for themselves.

Inheritance: There were no uniform rules regarding inheritance. It was, however, essential to the feudal system that the rank and position and land should descend from father to son. Women were also permitted to share in the inheritance though they were incapable of bearing arms. For example in France, and Germany the estates of a noble were divided among all his sons. They also held the rank of the noble. This led to sub-division and fragmentation of the estates and to anarchy of a very numerous and very poverty-stricken.

nobility. For quite sometime estates and fiefs were divided among brothers, but it was usual to grant the principal part of a large fief, including the chief town, to the eldest son. In England only the eldest son was regarded as noble and enjoyed the exclusive right to the whole estate. By inheriting the estates or fiefs together with the privileges and duties the feudal organisation of the society was maintained intact from generation to generation.

The feudal nobles were conscious of their own hereditary rights and position. They made every attempt to enhance their power and prestige with a view to prevent kingship becoming hereditary. The feudal nobles made attempts to make permanent and effective the principle of the nobles choosing and deposing the king.

The town-dwellers were outside the feudal system as they lived by trade. But towns were also drawn into the feudal system. Since feudalism demanded that the suzerain be found for every man, town-dwellers were originally treated as serfs under the lord on whose fief their towns were situated.

Manor: The feudal society was essentially agricultural as most people lived in the countryside. The people earned their livelihood by working on the farms of the feudal lords. Such farms were called manors and manor was the foundation of the socio-economic system. The manor was owned either by a noble or a bishop or an abbot. The cultivators were tenants. Manors varied in size. The lords lived in the Manor house or castle ordinarily built by wood and by twelfth and thirteenth centuries by stone. The castle was surrounded by a moat spanned by a draw bridge. The tenants lived in cottages not far from the manor house.

The land in the manor was classed under different categories. The lord's domain consisted of the land reserved for his exclusive use. Every householder had a garden of his own. The serfs cultivated the land belonging to the lord. In the manor they formed the majority of the population. They were attached to the soil and could not leave the manor without the consent of the lord. The independent tenants or freeholders who were in a minority were given a part of the arable lands of the village for their maintenance. They paid

fixed rents to the lord. They participated in the manorial court and were free to take their grievances to the court of the King. Beyond the arable lands were meadows on which the tenants could graze their cows and sheep. On the outskirts of the manor were woodlands and waste-lands. The tenants gathered wood for fuel from these lands.

Under the feudal regime the economic activities of the people revolved round the manor. The manor which was an economic unit was both self-supporting and self-sufficing.

Merits and Demerits of Feudalism: In the earlier Middle ages feudalism was both needful and useful. Its great merit lies in its simplicity. It was primarily a vast mutual-insurance society. In a barbarous age it supplied a rough-and-ready method of administration, of defence and of justice and brought stability to an uncertain society. It taught the idea that a man has duties and services to perform, as well as rights to claim and that it is the duty of the strong to protect their weaker dependants. Further, mutual rights and obligations of the different classes of the feudal system strengthened indirectly in the long run the ideas of liberty and of limited government. Indeed this very spirit helped not only preventing the rise of slavery 'but also did much to get rid of the last relics of slavery in Europe', and 'to assert the dignity and worth of every human being within the orbit of its influence.'

The defects of feudalism outweighed the meagre merits. It succeeded in establishing arbitrary dominance of a close hereditary class of landlords who could defy the king or central authority and to become independent tyrants. This development came in the way of the growth of well integrated states. The rule of equal universal law was replaced by local usage which the lords administered according to their whims and fancies. Feudalism believed in social inequality and it created a yawning gulf between serfs and tenants and their lords. Feudalism glorified war and the concept of 'might is right'. As a consequence, a military career came to be regarded as the only respectable occupation. Industry and learning were despised. The authority of the central government was weakened as a result of the grant of estates and powers coupled with the constant revolts of the

ambitious nobles. 'War, conquest and plunder were the breath of life to the nobility.' They fought among themselves or against the invaders and even against the King himself. Numerous castles of feudal Europe are true testimony to the oppressive character of the barons. Feudalism gave an impetus to local and regional spirit which was not conducive to the development of the spirit of national patriotism. The exaltation of aristocracy proved in course of time an obstacle to democracy and a menace to public peace. Finally, feudalism was responsible for a fierce struggle between Church and State, for the Church was also a feudal power and it also entangled itself in political controversies and worldly ambitions. In short, "feudalism was a nightmare of indiscriminate rapine and massacre; it was violent anarchy perpetuated for their own base advantage by a cruel and irresponsible aristocracy."

Decline of Feudalism: Feudalism flourished over a larger part of Europe for about seven centuries. With the rise of strong national monarchies at the close of the fifteenth century feudalism began to lose its influence as an institution which supplied the controlling forces and ideas of European life. In the twelfth century the indulgence in luxuries pushed up the prices of articles. The lords were hard-pressed for funds and in their extremity began to free serfs from certain obligations. They could seek alternative employment in cities and could obtain their legal freedom by residence there for a year plus one day. This led to the rise of middle class and paved the way for the breakdown of feudalism.

ISLAM

(The power of the religion of Mohammed, Islam, rests above all on its absolute simplicity: it is reduced to the simplest elements. First, the absolute unity and omnipotence of God: "there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.") Allah is "the Beneficent, the Merciful." (Second, the paramount importance of the life to come, this life being a time of trial and testing: the after-life will be either Hell in the fires of which unbelievers will burn eternally or the shaded, well-watered and fertile gardens of Paradise, in which the faithful will enjoy all they desire. Third, there is a brotherhood of all Muslims, a belonging-together, all social distinctions being done away with. Fourth, the absolute necessity of prayer and worship in common, to ensure a common adherence to Allah and his teaching and also social solidarity. Fifth, there are five duties that a Muslim must fulfil if he is to be reckoned a true and loyal believer: prayers daily five times with the due number of prostrations and facing in the direction of Mecca; the recitation of the Koran; the fast of Ramadan for a month; a pilgrimage to Mecca, if possible; and alms-giving.

The Koran is the Bible of Islam.) The word means Reading

or Lecture or Discourse. The Muslim view is that the Koran is the word of Allah, the revelation made to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel and dictated by Mohammed to secretaries. The later arrangement of the Koranic chapters or Surahs is in order of their length, the longest coming first. As regards their contents the chapters are divided into two groups: the Meccan Surahs, about 90 in number, are mostly short, incisive and impassioned and are religious and moral in character; the Medinese Surahs, about 24 in number, are long and legal in character. There are also historical narratives in the Koran, and these for the most part have their parallels in the Christian Bible; among the Old Testament characters Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, Solomon, Elias, Job and Jonah figure prominently; of the New Testament characters the only ones emphasized are Zacharias, John the Baptist, Jesus (Isa) and Mary (Miriam). The Koran was meant for oral recitation, public and private, for explanation and instruction.

Allah's prerogatives are set forth in the Koran. In himself he is the One, the Self-Sufficing, the Eternal, the All-Embracing, the Exalted, the Infallible: in his relation to men, he is the Originator, the Shaper, the Giver of life and of death, the Assembler of all at the last judgment, the Rewarder, the Punisher, the Compassionate One, the Answerer of prayer. At the beginning of nearly every Surah Allah is spoken of as "the Beneficent, the Merciful." It is taught in Islam that human society is without value save that with which Allah has endowed it as man's proving ground for eternal salvation: the whole of human life is an opportunity for submission to the will and service of God. Allah is and will always remain transcendent; and a true Muslim will seek not to identify himself with Allah, but rather to be always a soldier on active service for Allah.

(The full development of Mohammed's teaching and the organization of the Muslim community were a gradual process. The crisis of his career came with the Hegira in 622 when his teaching was repudiated by the Quereishis (and he was driven out of Mecca and took refuge with a few faithful followers in Medina. The year 622 became the starting-point of all Muslim chronology. It was in Medina that Mohammed was the

Prophet of Allah, and ruler, legislator and leader of the people; in Medina the new community took form as a political society; and it was from there that he sent out raiding parties that started the secular power of Islam on its career. In the desert skirmishes of the next few years (622-630) the whole future of western Asia and north Africa was decided; for from the taking of Mecca (630) Islam became a conquering force that absorbed and united all the tribal communities of Arabia. With the cessation of tribal feuds and warfare a tremendous wave of energy was liberated and swept over the surrounding countries. The extraordinary success and rapidity of Muslim expansion were due to two principal factors: the warlike spirit of the Arab and the intense religious enthusiasm which made the holy war (*jihad*) a supreme act of consecration and self-sacrifice.

THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE

Mohammed himself had led some 27 campaigns in person and had organized some 38 other campaigns which he deputed his close associates to lead. When he died in 632 the whole of Arabia had been conquered and won over to Islam. Under his immediate successors, the first four Caliphs, who ruled from 632 to 661, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt were conquered. During the rule of the Ummayyad dynasty (661-750) there was a vast expansion of the Empire by the conquest of North Africa, Spain, South France, Transoxiana and the Punjab: Damascus in Syria was set up as the capital. Had the great battle fought at Tours in 732 been won by the Arabs and not by Charles Martel, the whole of France might have been overrun and the forces of Islam might have swept further north. It must be noted that at the time and because of the Ummayyad succession the great schism among Muslims took place, the Shias who supported the succession of the line of Mohammed and the Sunnis who claimed to be the more orthodox Muslims and supported the Ummayyad claim. In a matter of a little over a century from the death of Mohammed the Arab Empire extended from Spain in the west to the Punjab in the

east) with the Byzantine Empire left out — a phenomenal achievement.

Thus the dynasty principally responsible for the vast expansion of the Empire was the Ummayyad: their successors, the Abbasids or the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), witnessed the development of the great cosmopolitan Islamic culture, in which were to be found elements from Syrian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Byzantine, North African or Berber, Spanish and Turkish cultures. The capital of the Empire was shifted from Damascus to Baghdad. Mesopotamia, it should be recalled, was a veritable palimpsest, on which every civilization since the time of the Sumerians had left its traces. (There was set up in Baghdad a very famous institution known as the House of Wisdom, a cultural centre for scholars who came from a variety of cultural backgrounds and were either Muslims, Jews or Christians: they all used Arabic as the medium of communication and greatly enriched that language. Teaching and scholarly work was done in Philosophy, Law, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine and Chemistry. Thus for more than 400 years during the Abbasid Caliphate the intellectual leadership of the world was with the people living in the Islamic Empire; and it was through the medium of Arabic that the scientific tradition in western Europe derived its origin. But it should be remembered that when we speak of Arabic medicine or Arabic mathematics or Arabic philosophy we mean that body of knowledge enshrined in books written in the Arabic language by scholars who were Persians, Syrians, Egyptians or Arabs and drew their material from Greek, Aramaean, Persian, Indian and other sources. The country of western Europe that came most and was longest under the influence of Arab culture was Spain: it is no wonder that having been under Arab (Moorish) rule for nearly 700 years the Spanish landscape and people should even to our own day bear strong traces of Arab cultural and even racial influences.)

At Baghdad also was established a kind of international trading centre, where merchandise from all parts of the Empire and from countries far beyond the confines of the Empire was bought and sold: porcelain, paper, silk and the silk-worm from China; rice, wood and metal work from India; spices from the East

east with the Byzantine Empire left out — a phenomenal achievement.

Thus the dynasty principally responsible for the vast expansion of the Empire was the Ummayyad: their successors, the Abbasids or the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), witnessed the development of the great cosmopolitan Islamic culture, in which were to be found elements from Syrian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Byzantine, North African or Berber, Spanish and Turkish cultures. The capital of the Empire was shifted from Damascus to Baghdad. Mesopotamia, it should be recalled, was a veritable palimpsest, on which every civilization since the time of the Sumerians had left its traces. (There was set up in Baghdad a very famous institution known as the House of Wisdom, a cultural centre for scholars who came from a variety of cultural backgrounds and were either Muslims, Jews or Christians: they all used Arabic as the medium of communication and greatly enriched that language. Teaching and scholarly work was done in Philosophy, Law, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine and Chemistry. Thus for more than 400 years during the Abbasid Caliphate the intellectual leadership of the world was with the people living in the Islamic Empire; and it was through the medium of Arabic that the scientific tradition in western Europe derived its origin. But it should be remembered that when we speak of Arabic medicine or Arabic mathematics or Arabic philosophy we mean that body of knowledge enshrined in books written in the Arabic language by scholars who were Persians, Syrians, Egyptians or Arabs and drew their material from Greek, Aramaean, Persian, Indian and other sources. The country of western Europe that came most and was longest under the influence of Arab culture was Spain: it is no wonder that having been under Arab (Moorish) rule for nearly 700 years the Spanish landscape and people should even to our own day bear strong traces of Arab cultural and even racial influences.)

At Baghdad also was established a kind of international trading centre, where merchandise from all parts of the Empire and from countries far beyond the confines of the Empire was bought and sold: porcelain, paper, silk and the silk-worm from China; rice, wood and metal work from India; spices from the East

Indies; ivory, ebony, gold and slaves from Africa (the Arabs were notorious slave-traders); honey, wax and furs from Russia. The Arab traders were valuable intermediaries between the Far East and the Far West. The name Arabian Sea still bears witness to their great activity as traders. Their exports were dates, sugar, brocades, rugs, steel daggers and swords, glassware, cotton and woollen goods. Arab coins have been found in Scandinavia, Germany and Russia.

DECLINE AND FALL

Islam, the religion Mohammed gave to Arabia, supplied a great need of the people inhabiting that peninsula: it gave them a most remarkable solidarity and cohesion that was at once religious, moral, social, political and military. What helped very much in achieving this was the utter simplicity and the clear categorical character of its teaching, beliefs and worship. An integral part of the religion of Islam were its proselytizing zeal, drive and **jihad**: all these, together with the strength that came from new-found cohesiveness, sent Islam forth on its career of conquest and conversion into lands that were rich and luring, but that were inhabited by peoples in cultural decline, politically disunited and militarily weak. Further, the immediate successors of Mohammed and the early Ummayyads were able and energetic rulers and leaders, while the Abbasids showed great breadth of vision and were tolerant to the various groups within the Empire. These are the main factors that explain the remarkable rise and growth of the Arab Empire and of Arabic culture.

But what is the explanation of its decline and fall? We know that it is a law of history that no empire lasts forever: every empire has its period, long or short, of growth and development; it reaches its peak; then there is a sort of plateau, and there follow its inevitable decline, collapse and disappearance. The Arab Empire, like the Roman Empire before it, had become too vast and unwieldy, thus raising the formidable problem of government, administration and communications. Arab government was largely based on the personality of the Caliphs rather than on institutions. Besides, the cost of

government, administration and military defence was ever increasing, with the result that higher taxes had to be levied from subject populations. Again, localism or provincialism asserted itself more and more particularly during periods of weak central government and of decline: provincial governors made a bid for autonomy and independence with the active co-operation of local populations. A further source of weakness were the numerous rival sects within Islam; this disunion encouraged Christian populations to unite and rise in revolt against Muslim rulers. Finally, it was the fierce Seljuk Turks that delivered the death-blow to the Arab Empire. The Seljuks were themselves converted to Islam, but not to Islamic culture: they were far from being tolerant in their attitude to other religions. The Seljuks in their turn were overwhelmed by the Ottoman Turks, whose empire lasted in a half-living, half-dying condition till the end of the First World War.

CONCLUSION

Without Mohammed's work the Arabs could never have attained the unity and religious impulse which rendered them irresistible, and drove them to carve out an empire in three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe, that rivalled the Roman Empire in size, though not in efficient government. Arabic culture, i.e. culture evolved through the medium of the Arabic language, was dominated by Islam and its outlook on life; but it contained many rich secular elements, like mathematics and astronomy, chemistry and medicine, philosophy and law. This sensitivity of Arabic culture to other cultures and its readiness to absorb and assimilate elements from them indicate the spirit of tolerance of the Arab rulers and people: Islam was content to be the dominant religion in an empire and society embracing many faiths. Non-Arabs were judged according to their own law, legal customs and traditions. It was this quality of tolerance that made it possible for the Empire to be a most influential and effective transmitter of a variegated culture. Indeed, if western Europe had had to discover for itself all that the Arabic-speaking people had taught it, the civilization of the West might well have

been delayed for several centuries. (It is significant that Spain under Arab rule became the richest and most advanced country in Europe and played a dominant role in the sixteenth century. Briefly then, taking Arabic culture as a whole, it can be said that it was assimilative rather than original; and the significance of the Arab Empire lay in this that it provided the framework for the process of cultural assimilation and dissemination: in this important historical function the Arabs were second only to the Romans.)

THE CRUSADES

Viewed in their proper setting the Crusades appear as the medieval chapter in the long story of interaction and of give and take between East and West, between Asia and Europe, between Islam and Christianity. The Seljuk Turks were fierce barbarous tribal peoples from Turkestan in Central Asia. They had in the course of the 10th and 11th centuries conquered Persia, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine from the Arabs and were largely responsible for the overthrow of the Arab Empire. The Arabs had been very tolerant towards Christianity and had allowed Christians access to the Holy Land for the purpose of the annual pilgrimages. The Seljuk Turks on the contrary were intolerant and banned pilgrimages. Moreover

they spilled over into Europe and were a serious and constant menace to the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople.

The Crusades were a movement that had several aspects — religious, political, economic and cultural. Starting towards the end of the 11th century, they went on intermittently to the end of the 13th century, some eight Crusades altogether. They were expeditions, military in character, to the East principally to halt and push back the thrust of the Seljuk Turks and to recover the Holy Land for the Christians, so that the pilgrimages and also the trade and commerce between the West and the East might once again go on unimpeded. The principal cause and motive force of the Crusades was religious fervour and zeal: the Cross must replace the Crescent. Those who went on the Crusades had the Cross in red cloth sewn on their outer garments. Kings and princes, bishops and abbots, barons and knights, merchants and craftsmen, peasants and serfs took the Cross and gave their services to God and their faith.

To be sure, in a great popular movement extending over two centuries like the Crusades, many mixed motives worked together although the initial impetus came from religious fervour. The Roman Papacy, besides desiring to reconquer the Holy Land of Palestine for Christianity, sought to reunite the Roman and the Greek Orthodox Churches into one Church under the Pope. Princes, barons and knights hoped to conquer and carve out principalities and kingdoms for themselves in eastern lands. The rich merchant princes of Venice, Genoa and Pisa aimed at extending and securing their trade in the east. Many adventure-loving people and many European ne'er-do-wells thought to avail themselves of whatever opportunities came their way far away from home.

The initiative in starting the whole movement was taken by Pope Urban II who preached the First Crusade (1095). He was deeply moved and alarmed by the very great danger in which the Byzantine Empire and Church lay because of the serious encroachment of the Seljuk Turks. The Byzantine Emperor Alexis Comnenus had appealed to Urban to come to his aid. The latter made a fervent appeal to the whole of Christendom

to rally to the cause of the Cross. His rousing call was "God wills it — to the Cross!" There was a wonderfully enthusiastic response to the call, and about 4,500 cavalry and 30,000 infantry set out for the Holy Land drawn from various countries of Western and Central Europe and under their own leaders. Of all the eight Crusades the First was the most important and had the greatest military success to its credit. How erratic a movement the Crusades taken as a whole were may be judged by this circumstance that only four Crusades actually reached and fought in the Holy Land, two were diverted to and directed against Egypt, one against Constantinople and one to Africa.

In the end the movement petered out and failed. The Crusades failed because they were hurriedly and badly organized, because the lines of communication were long and difficult to maintain and the financial resources did not hold out; further, the rival ambitions of kings and princes prevented concerted action; princes and noblemen fell out with one another over the distribution of conquered territories and spoils; finally the Seljuk Turks consolidated their position in the face of Christian attacks and drove back the invaders. Little by little religious enthusiasm flagged and died down; and the movement that had started with such great fervour vanished into thin air. But it was not without some far-reaching results.

Thanks to the frequent contacts with the East during the period of the Crusades (1095-1290), European peoples in the West became better acquainted with Eastern or Byzantine Europe and West Asia, where civilization and the art of living had reached a higher standard. Secondly, an immense impetus was given to trade and commerce, and it was during this period that the foundations of the wealth of Italian cities like Venice, Genoa and Pisa were laid with more and better banking and business facilities becoming available. Thirdly, a remarkable fillip was given to shipbuilding, and the Mediterranean proved to be the training ground for the wonderful voyages of discovery of the 15th and 16th centuries. Fourthly, it is interesting to note that contacts between the West and the East, during the Crusades led to the introduction into Europe of pepper, spices, sugar, fruits like cherries, apricots, peaches, dates and melons, luxury goods like

perfumes, jewellery, exquisite silk fabrics, cotton textiles, linen and carpets, and pottery. It was at this time that the richer people in Europe, particularly Western Europe, acquired a taste for the pepper and spices of the East. They could not do without these commodities to such an extent that later on when the routes *via* the Mediterranean to the East were blocked by the Ottoman Turks, merchants and seamen took the trouble of finding new routes to the sources of pepper and spices at very considerable expense and risk, thereby discovering a whole new world in the process. Finally, the great widening of horizons, not only geographically but also commercially and culturally, helped in no small way to break down the barriers of Feudalism: it came home to people that there were other ways of life than the European way or the Feudal way; that there were other sources of wealth, and more abundant sources, than land and agriculture.

Sidney Painter, who has written a very well known and standard book on the history of the Middle Ages, pays a warm tribute to the men who went on the Crusades. He writes: "The Crusades are at once the chief proof of the tremendous vitality and expansive power of medieval civilization and the most concrete illustration of the meaning of the common expression 'an Age of Faith' It seems clear that the majority who went crusading were moved by genuine religious enthusiasm and complete confidence that the Crusade was the path to salvation. . . . The general assumption was that a crusader would never return home. Although many did return, usually worn out and bankrupt, far more found their graves in distant lands. To all who question the faith of the Middle Ages the Crusades stand as a crushing refutation."

A. REVIVAL OF TOWN LIFE

The fall of the Roman empire and the destruction caused by barbarian invasions resulted in the disappearance of several towns. The population of Rome, which was more than one million, came down to not more than fifty thousand. The same was the fate of several other cities. Nimes in France and Bath in England had almost been wiped out. The set-back to town life in the Dark Age was a great blow to civilization and culture. The centuries of anarchy provided no suitable climate for the continuation of existing towns and the establishment of new ones. Europe took about four hundred years to build or rebuild towns.

Owing to business activities of the Vikings and of the Venetians, the tenth century witnessed the revival of town life. This was undoubtedly a healthy sign indicating the recovery of Europe.

Where Towns Rose: Towns grew at certain places having an advantageous position.

1. *Sites of Old Roman Cities:* Some towns arose on the ruins of the old Roman cities or where Roman armies used to be stationed.

2. *Castles of Feudal Barons:* Towns rose around the castles of feudals barons, if favourable conditions prevailed.

3. *Churches and Monasteries* : Towns also grew near churches and monasteries.

4. *Market Centres* : Market centres were also favourable for the growth of towns.

5. *Sea Coast* : Places easily accessible to the sea grew into towns.

6. *River Banks* : Some towns rose on banks of rivers.

B. FACTORS FAVOURABLE TO GROWTH OF TOWNS

Certain factors were favourable to growth of towns.

1. *Death of Nobles* : Many nobles died in wars, and towns became free from feudal control.

2. *Needs of Nobles and Desire to Purchase Rights* : Feudal barons, who went on wasting their substance on useless wars, were in want. The construction of castles, luxurious living and private wars made the barons seek new sources of money. People of towns were ready to offer money to the needy barons to secure charters of rights. Many barons leased out lands to towns, as they yielded much income.

3. *Brisk Trade* : The tremendous increase in trade gave a great impetus to towns. Towns started producing more commodities than what a particular area needed previously. The surplus goods could be sold to the merchants of the East and the articles of the East could be purchased. French traders established commercial contact with the Muslim merchants of North Africa and Italian business men had commercial intercourse with the Muslims of the East. Merchants in countries like England, Belgium, Portugal and also Germany developed brisk commercial activities.

4. *Crusades* : Though Christians fought against the Turks in the Crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries to free the holy land of Palestine, they became friendly with each other for the sake of trade. The Crusades created a strong demand for Oriental articles. Spices, silk, precious stones and other articles of the East were imported by the eastern and southern ports of the Mediterranean.

GREAT TOWNS

We may mention here the names of the towns that became famous in Italy, Flanders and Germany as great centres of trade and commerce, culture and civilization.

Italy: Venice, Florence, Milan, Rome and Genoa were the important towns in Italy. Florence, where a great cultural renaissance began, was called the Athens of Italy. Venice earned fame as the Queen of the Mediterranean.

Florence had risen as a town two centuries before Christ. It succumbed to barbarian destruction and recovered only in the 8th century. It was on the cross-roads between France and Rome and had easy access to the Mediterranean. It had its own fleet carrying goods to and fro. It had fabulously rich merchant princes and many flourishing guilds.

Venice, which was built by Italian fugitives during the Lombard invasion in the sixth century, became rich, as the commerce of northern and central Europe flowed to the Near East through this city. Venetians earned fame for their boats and trade, their riches, culture, love of art and learning.

For some time, Genoa exercised virtual monopoly over the Black Sea trade.

Flanders: Bruges and Ghent became famous in Flanders (Belgium) as centres of trade in woollen cloths.

Germany: Cologne, Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, Augsburg and Nuremberg were prominent towns in Germany. Augsburg and Nuremberg became rich and prosperous, as they were located on the trade route between Venice and the North. They became distributing centres for the goods from the East. Hamburg, Bremen and Lubeck carried on brisk trade with England and the countries of the Baltic Sea.

C. FEATURES OF TOWNS

We may briefly refer here to the features of medieval towns.

1. *Not Like Roman Towns:* Medieval towns could not be compared to the grand towns and cities of the palmy days of ancient Rome, or to modern towns. They lacked the amenities and conveniences of modern towns. The population was small. A majority of towns had a population of about ten thousand, and big towns had about twenty thousand. Very rarely towns had a huge population. Venice and Paris had one hundred thousand, and Florence, Milan and Genoa over fifty thousand. They did not have theatres, baths, stadia, broad and well-paved roads, and good water supply. They were all small and over-crowded, and appeared least

impressive. Streets were crooked, narrow, dirty and not well lit. Except towns like London, Bristol, Norwich, Cologne, Troyes, Mainz and Rheims, towns had the appearance of prosperous villages. In many of the towns, houses were small and shabby, crudely built and furnished, had no windows, and were without arrangements for drainage.

2. *Self-sufficient*: Most of the towns were self-sufficient. They produced almost everything they needed, and had little contact with the outside world in the early medieval period.

3. *Under Feudal Control*: Medieval towns were in the feudal picture, and feudal barons exercised control over them. The feudal lords demanded various vexatious payments from the town-dwellers.

4. *Nationalism*: Town-dwellers in the later medieval period had become rich and prosperous, comparatively speaking, and they developed a broad and progressive outlook in contrast to the narrow-minded outlook of the manor. (They came into contact with the people of the outside world, and this enabled them to develop higher loyalties.) They were capable of thinking in terms of the king and the country rather than of feudal lord and manor (Some of the towns even developed national consciousness.)

5. *Centres of Culture*: When compared to the people of the rural areas, the town-dwellers were cultured, they wished to have all the facilities available according to the standards of those days; (A well built town had strong protective walls and watch towers known as belfries.) (They had their own administrative offices, assembly halls, churches, prisons and guilds. They patronised art, architecture, literature and learning, and became centres of culture and civilization.)

6. *Administrative and Political Experiments*: - Judged by contemporary standards, some of the medieval towns had good administration. Enterprising town-dwellers were keen on having a well-organized and efficient government. Particularly, Italian towns like Venice and Florence were well-governed. They even conducted political and constitutional experiments like the ancient Greek city states. Their functions were similar to those of a state. Town councils organized defence, made laws, imposed taxes, collected customs duties, administered justice, gave charity, encouraged colonies abroad, and made treaties.