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LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF  
**Famous Rulers**

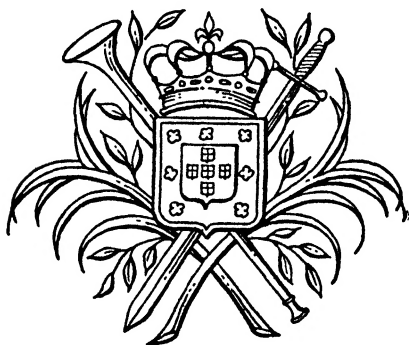




LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF  
**Famous Rulers**

By HENRY THOMAS AND  
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*Illustrations by*  
GORDON ROSS



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# Introduction

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**I**T is not a coincidence that more than half of the famous rulers composing this book have been geniuses of evil rather than doers of good. The kings and the conquerors and the dictators are the spoiled children of the human family. Whether through inheritance or through seizure, they find themselves possessed of more than their fair slice of the cake of material happiness. And in their eagerness to gobble it up they spoil their moral digestion. The sweetness of excessive prosperity is bad for the human soul. Occasionally we find a ruler, like Asoka, who rises above his royal environment to noble thoughts and noble deeds. But in the majority of cases the rulers of the world, like the children of rich and indulgent parents, succumb to their egotistical ambitions and their reckless whims.

Yet in the indulgence of their ambitions and their whims they frequently present a spectacle of dazzling fascination. And it is this spectacle, sometimes comic but more often tragic in its results, that we have tried to bring back to life in the following pages. The splendor of Solomon, the impetuosity of Caesar, the vanity of Augustus, the voluptuousness of Kublai Khan,

## INTRODUCTION

the ribaldry of Henry VIII, the violence of Ivan the Terrible, the pomposity of Louis XIV, the egomania of Napoleon and the bluster of Kaiser Wilhelm—these are but a few of the historic dramas that the gods have prepared for the contemplation and the instruction of their human children. And we have tried here to catch a few of the echoes of these dramas. To catch the echoes, and to present the leading actors. For these leading actors, whether or not we approve of their parts, have nevertheless been selected to hold the center of the stage and to dominate the action of their generation. Destiny has thrown the spotlight upon them; and, whatever else we may say of them, we must admit that their acting, even though ignoble at times, provides always a challenge to the intellect and a stimulation to the eye. For all of them depict, in their various moods, the selfsame drama of the Great Divide—the unbridgeable gap that lies between the infinity of mortal ambition and the finiteness of ambitious mortality.

H. T.

D. L. T.

# **KING SOLOMON**



*Important Events in Life of Solomon*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Succeeded his father on the throne of David (C.974 B.C.)</b>               | <b>With Hiram of Tyre he organized a fleet of commercial ships.</b>          |
| <b>Insured friendship of Egypt by espousing the Pharaoh's daughter.</b>       | <b>Spent thirteen years in constructing a magnificent royal palace.</b>      |
| <b>Consolidated alliance of his father, David, with Hiram, ruler of Tyre.</b> | <b>Erected the Temple of Yahwe. Fortified numerous cities in his domain.</b> |
|   | <b>Reigned for forty years.</b>  |

---

# King Solomon

*Circa 950 B.C.*

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**K**ING DAVID, in a moment of weakness, had sent his captain, Uriah, into the forefront of the battle in order that he himself might possess Uriah's beautiful young wife, Bathsheba. When Uriah was killed, King David married Bathsheba. Solomon was the child of this marriage. At his birth, the prophet Nathan had named him Jedidiah, which means Beloved of God. But later on, as David repented of his sins and turned his eyes from the pursuits of war to the worship of God, he dedicated his son to the establishment of good will among men and harmony among the nations. And it was then that King David changed his son's name to Solomon, or Shalomo—the Child of Peace.

But when King David died there was for a time no peace in his house. Plots and counterplots, this man and that man striving for the throne, accusations, arrests, murders. In all this turbulence and hatred and crime Solomon took an active part. He killed his brother, Adonijah, and his father's general, Joab. He deposed Abiathar from the high priesthood, and he appointed Zadok in his place. For this was the manner in which the princes of that period paved their way to the

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

throne. Solomon was no better than the average man of his day.

But he was wiser. "The king's wrath," he said, "is as the roaring of a lion. But his favor is as dew upon the grass." Having disposed of his rivals and their adherents, he settled down upon his throne to rule for a time in justice, in wisdom and in peace. From far and wide people came to him to settle their disputes. And in his settlement of these disputes there was shrewdness as well as justice. One day three brothers came before him. Their father, they said, had died on the previous day. Just before his death he had told them that he was leaving all his possessions to his only legitimate son. And now each one of them claimed that he, and he alone, was the one legitimate son.

King Solomon heard their story and sat back and pondered. How was he to determine the true son and heir? Finally he turned to them.

"Let the body of your dead father be brought here, and let it be placed upright against a pillar."

The brothers did as they were ordered.

"And now," said the king, "bring me a bow and three arrows."

When the bow and the arrows had been brought, King Solomon commanded each one of the three brothers to shoot an arrow at the dead man. "He whose aim is the best shall be adjudged the true heir."

The eldest of the three brothers took careful aim and pierced the dead man in the arm.

"Well done!" said the king.

The aim of the second brother was better. He succeeded in piercing the dead man's forehead.

"Very well done!" observed Solomon.

The youngest brother took aim and then threw the bow and arrow upon the ground. "I would rather lose my inheritance than desecrate my father's body."

## KING SOLOMON

“You,” exclaimed King Solomon, “are the true heir!”

Such, we are told, was the beginning of King Solomon’s reign.

### II

THERE are two contradictory pictures of the historic King Solomon.

On the one hand, he is painted as a man of winning personality, a dispenser of justice, a teacher of mercy, a builder of splendor, a lover of peace. Solomon the Wise!

On the other hand, he is depicted as a murderer of his brother, a despoiler of his people, a wastrel of his money, a dupe of his women, a blasphemer of his God. Solomon the Foolish!

In addition to these two pictures there is a third—the picture of the legendary Solomon. In the host of legends that have grown up around the personality of this poet-prince we get the very human, if not altogether historical, portrait of a king who was neither a saint nor a devil but a man who had many weaknesses and much wisdom, a touch of tyranny and a measure of tenderness, the arrogance of vanity and the bitterness of disillusion. Solomon, the Foolish-Wise, the despot who enslaved his people, the poet who gave them their Proverbs and their Song of Songs.

Historical fiction, or mythological poetry, may sometimes give us a better picture of the past than a dry chronicle of actual events. The fictitious Solomon—as he appears in the numerous stories of the Kings, the Talmud, the Arabian *Tales*, the Indian *Legends* and the Irish *Romances*—seems somehow more understandable, more companionable, more realistic, more *alive* than the historical Solomon of his one-sided worshipers on the one hand or of his equally one-sided slanderers on the other.

King Solomon of the Historians is dead. Long live the king—the legendary King Solomon of the Poets!

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

### III

ONCE in a dream—so the legend tells us—the Lord asked Solomon what gift, above all others, he would prize most dearly. “An understanding heart,” said the young king.

“This you shall have,” promised the Lord.

And when the king awoke he found upon his couch the sapphire ring of Adam—the magic ring which controlled the winds of the air, the waters of the sea, the mysteries of the earth and the powers of life and death. With the help of this ring Solomon was able to understand the language of the birds, the whispering of the trees and the flowers, the murmuring of the ocean and all the hidden voices of heaven and earth. But—such is the foolishness of human wisdom—the young king was not altogether contented with an understanding heart. This, he had said, was the most *desirable* of God’s gifts. But there were others, too, that he wanted—power, and glory, and wealth, and beautiful women, and ships, and horses and chariots and fullness of years. And he used the gift of his wisdom for the attainment of these other gifts, so that he became the richest and the most famous and the most envied of all the monarchs of his day.

Vanity of vanities! The pursuit of fame was to give him an arrogant mind and the acquisition of wealth, a cruel heart. “The way of pride,” he was to write later in life, “is the way to misfortune. He that trusts in his riches is destined to fall.”

It was out of his own sorrow that he was to cull this nugget of wisdom. But, as yet, he was unaware of the sufferings that he was to undergo as a result of the misuse of his wisdom.

### IV

SOLOMON, secure in his wisdom, sat on his golden throne and wielded a scepter of peace. The Edomites and the Moabites broke away from his kingdom, and he allowed them to go with-

## KING SOLOMON

out a struggle. It would be unwise, he realized, to hold restless alien peoples against their will. Instead he tried to bind his own people more closely together. He abolished the old boundaries of the twelve tribes of Israel, and he divided the country into twelve geographical districts, or states, placing each of these districts under a governor appointed by himself. And for a time the people of Israel dwelt in safety, every man under his vine and fig tree, and justice reigned in the land from Dan to Beer-sheba. He ruled with impartial fairness over the rich and the poor alike. Especially over the poor. He seasoned his justice not only with wisdom but with mercy. And the keenness of his wisdom became more and more the amazement of the people. He devised new, ingenious ways by which he was able to observe the character of his subjects. One day he called to him an officer who was reputed to be the most faithful man in Jerusalem. "If you fulfill my orders," said the king, "I will honor you."

The man bowed low. "His Majesty commands, his subjects obey. What is His Majesty's will?"

"Take this sword," said the king. "And if tomorrow morning you bring me the head of your wife, I will make you governor over all my other governors."

The man took the sword and returned the next day—but without his wife's head. "I drew the blade," he said, "when my wife was asleep. But, as I was about to strike, I noticed how her hair was spread over the pillow and fell upon the faces of our two children. I couldn't bring myself to do it."

The next day Solomon called this man's wife, who was reputed to be the most faithful woman in Jerusalem. "Take this sword," he said to her. "And if tomorrow you bring me the head of your husband, I will make you my queen."

The woman took the sword and went home. That night she prepared a banquet for her husband. And, as soon as he fell into a heavy sleep from the fumes of the wine, she brought the sword sharply down upon his neck. But Solomon in his wisdom

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

had given her a sword of tin. The blow awakened the husband but did him no harm.

The next morning—so the legend goes on—the king called the husband and the wife to the palace. “Behold,” he said, pointing them out to the populace, “one faithful man among a thousand have I found, but one faithful woman I have not found among ten thousand.”

### V

AND it was the unfaithful women in Solomon’s life that proved to be his own undoing. He married them, not for love, but for practical reasons of state. For, in addition to the gift of wisdom, he had now acquired the curse of ambition. He entered into commercial partnerships with many foreign kings. And again and again he cemented these partnerships by marriages with the kings’ daughters. These marriages brought him much wealth and many vexations. His wives demanded costly garments, golden chariots, cedarwood palaces, profuse banquets. They disdained the poverty of the little Judean city to which he had brought them to live. They urged him to build, and to build again, until Jerusalem began to vie in splendor with the fabulous cities of Tyre, and Sidon, and Nineveh, and Rameses and Babylon. He sent his ships across the seas to bring gold and silver and precious stones for the embellishment of his kingdom, and he enslaved the foreigners in Palestine, and finally his own countrymen, in his unquenchable thirst for luxury and more luxury. And he laid heavy taxes upon his people to meet the ever-mounting pyramid of his extravagances. And the people groaned under their burden, and there was discontentment and rebellion in the land. Solomon, to quiet their discontent, tried to turn his wisdom into cunning. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard,” he cried to his unwilling slaves, “consider her ways and be wise.”

But his slaves kept on murmuring, and his concubines kept

## KING SOLOMON

on lashing his ambition into greater and ever greater extravagances. He fell into debaucheries, drinking and singing and dancing away the nights. Sometimes the still, small voice of his earlier wisdom would whisper to him through the fumes of the wine. "Even in laughter the heart acheth, and the end of mirth is heaviness." But he put away these words from his heart and went on with the piling of his treasures only to see them melt away in the flames of his desire.

And his desire to please his alien wives led him to another evil—idolatry. He introduced into Jerusalem the worship of all their foreign gods. Not the inward faith but the outward pomp—the licentiousness, the superstition, the human sacrifices, the material and the spiritual perversions of the priests of Moloch, of Osiris, of Ishtar, of Baal.

And all this time his expenses kept on accumulating, until the income of his taxes could no longer keep pace with the outflow of his dissipations. And so he found himself compelled to borrow huge sums of money from Hiram, the king of the Phoenicians. When the time came for the return of the money King Solomon was obliged to give Hiram twenty cities. For he had no money with which to discharge his debts.

And thus, in his eagerness to win surpassing glory, he succeeded only in winning surpassing sorrow. And rebellion among his subjects. And contentiousness among his wives. "It is better to dwell in a desert land," he wrote in his Proverbs, "than with a contentious and fretful woman."

He knew whereof he spoke. For—so the legend tells us—it was the fretfulness and the jealousy of his wives that for a time drove him out of his kingdom and compelled him to live in many a desert country.

## VI

**HERE** is how it came about that Solomon was exiled from his native land:



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

Asmodeus, the king of the demons, had become the boon companion of Solomon. He partook of his banquets, he joined him in his debaucheries, he shared with him the embraces of his wives. Now some of these wives, being enraged with Solomon because he lavished upon them, as they thought, an insufficiency of his favors, conspired with Asmodeus to deprive Solomon of his kingdom. And so, one day when Solomon was in his cups and his senses were befogged with drink, the demon asked him to show him the sapphire ring which had belonged to Adam—the ring whose magic virtue had brought to Solomon the understanding heart. King Solomon took the ring off his finger and gave it to Asmodeus. Whereupon Asmodeus, towering toward the clouds, tossed the ring into the whirlpool, seized Solomon in his arms and hurled him across the heavens into the desert sands. And then, having taken the semblance of the king, Asmodeus sat upon Solomon's throne and reigned in his stead.

This legend, fantastic as it sounds, is nevertheless susceptible to a natural interpretation. The evil side of Solomon, the demon within him, had driven out the good side. So that there dwelt upon the throne nothing but the semblance of a once wise and mighty king, while the better part of him, his former justice and goodness and mercy, was hidden away from sight, drifting with the winds over the sands of the desert. The poets of Palestine and of Arabia were fond of thus explaining, by means of an allegory, the gradual moral degradation of the characters of their kings.

But to return to our legend. When Solomon found himself in the wilderness he wandered from town to town, crying everywhere, "I am King Solomon!" But everywhere he was received with derision. "Off with you! King Solomon is on his throne. You are nothing but a beggar!"

Even the beggars drove him away. "If you are the king," they mocked, "then get back to your throne instead of robbing us of our rightful portion of charity."

## KING SOLOMON

And so he wandered alone, befriended by neither rich nor poor. And as he toiled over the wilderness, living upon berries and wild grapes and stray ears of corn that had been left in the corners of the fields, he contrasted his former glory with his present misery. "I searched in my heart how to pamper my flesh with wine. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks. . . . I acquired menservants and maidservants; I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem. I gathered me also silver and gold, and treasures, and men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men, a multitude of women. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. . . . And now I look upon all the works of my hands and the possessions that once were mine, and behold, they are melted away. And I beg for my bread, and I am scorned of men and hounded by the beasts of the field. . . . And lo, all is vanity and a striving after wind, and there is no profit under the sun."

One night, as he was lying down to sleep among the rocks, he saw a man digging up a sack of gold from the earth. The next morning, when he came into the city, the guards seized him. "This is the thief who stole the gold!" cried the man whom Solomon had seen digging it out of the ground on the previous night.

It was in vain that Solomon protested his innocence. The real thief was a friend of the judges, and Solomon was but a strange beggar. The judges ordered him to confess where he had hidden the gold; and when Solomon still insisted that he was not the thief, he was lashed with a hundred lashes of the whip and then thrown into a cell. "Happy are they that are dead, more than they that are living," he cried. "But happier than all are they that have never been born. For they have not beheld the evil work that is done under the sky."

He was chained among the other prisoners, and when he con-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

versed with them he found that some of them were guilty, and some were innocent. One of them had been thrown into captivity because his richer neighbor had coveted his field; another, because his friend had coveted his wife; still another, because he had dared to accuse the judge of injustice; and a fourth, because he had complained to his king against the burden of his taxes. The poor were suffering because of the greed of the rich; and the just, because of the arrogance of the unjust.

And then Solomon began to realize that he, too, had inflicted sufferings upon the poor and the just because of his own greed and injustice. He had slain his brother; he had enslaved his subjects; he had blasphemed his God. And then he repented of his evil ways, and he said: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and the love of mercy is the beginning of justice."

King Solomon had acquired nobility through suffering. The Lord had corrected him because he loved him, as a loving father corrects his wayward child. And, having been corrected, he was now ready to win back his former glory but not his former vanity. The walls of his prison—so goes the legend—melted away, and he stepped forth a free man. He went among the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, and he helped them at their labor. And he went among the hungry and the thirsty, and he shared with them his food and his drink. And he went among the young men and the maidens, and he rejoiced with them in their joys, and he sang for them a song of love—the tenderest of Hebrew poems, *The Song of Songs*, which is Solomon's. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. . . . As a rose of Sharon, as a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens of the vineyards. . . . Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth and the time of singing is come. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

As the heart of Solomon grew more tender—continues the

## KING SOLOMON

legend—his mind grew wiser until he began once more to understand the language of the birds, the whispering of the trees and the flowers, the murmuring of the ocean and all the hidden voices of heaven and earth. He made his way back to Jerusalem and took service in the kitchen of the palace. One day, after he had cooked a huge fish for the table of Asmodeus, he prepared a little fish for himself and sat down to eat it. He opened the fish, and lo! there within its belly lay the sapphire ring which Asmodeus had taken from him and hurled into the waters. And, as Solomon put the ring back upon his finger, a voice came down to him from heaven:

“Go back now to thy rightful place and rule thy people. And inscribe this truth upon the tablets of thy mind: The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established forever.”

## VII

ASMODEUS was sitting in the council hall of Solomon's palace. A number of people had come to seek justice at his evil hands, while the multitude stood by to marvel at the cruelty of his judgments. The king, they said, had fallen lower and lower from day to day until the words of his mouth were no better than those of the devil himself. For they did not know that it was indeed the devil who was reigning in Solomon's place. Nor did they know that standing amongst them, dressed in the attire of a kitchen servant, was Solomon himself.

Two men had come forward to present their case before Asmodeus. One of the men spoke, saying:

“O king of kings, I crave justice! The other day I purchased a cornfield from this man, my neighbor. As I was plowing the field I found a treasure therein. And I say that this treasure is mine, for I purchased from my neighbor not only the land but everything that was to be found within it.”

“Nay,” argued his neighbor. “I sold him the land, but not

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

the gold within it. O my king, O my father, return the treasure to me, its rightful owner!"

Asmodeus turned to the disputants with an evil frown. "Contentiousness among my people," he cried, "is not to be tolerated. Wherefore it is my judgment that both of you shall be cast into jail and that the land and the treasure shall be given into my keeping."

There was an angry murmur among the populace. But the murmur subsided when Solomon stepped from their midst and turned to address them. For, as he spoke, the old fire flashed from his eyes, and the old mercy shone upon his face. "I have a better judgment," he said. And, calling the first man to him, he asked: "Have you a son?"

"Yes."

"And"—turning to the other man—"have you a daughter?"

"I have."

"Then it is *my* judgment that the son and the daughter become man and wife and that the treasure be given them as their dowry."

"Who is this man who judges so wisely?" asked the people of one another.

And Solomon, showing them the sapphire ring of understanding and loving-kindness, cried, "I am your king!"

## VIII

WHEN Asmodeus beheld the ring of Solomon—concludes the legend—he displayed his cloven hoof and vanished into the depths of the earth. And from that day to this the wisdom and the justice of Solomon above the earth are in ceaseless conflict with the stupidity and the iniquity of the devil and his brood below. . . .

Such, then, is the fictitious story of King Solomon. But is not fiction sometimes truer than history?

## KING SOLOMON

Besides, there is an interesting sequel to the story. And this is history. When Solomon saw the evil of his ways and the danger of the worship of many gods, he built a Temple to the One God of the Universe. In the building of this Temple, the sanctuary of peace, he avoided as much as possible the use of iron. For iron, his prophets had advised him, is a warlike metal.

That little Temple of Peace, perched upon the hilltop of the eternal city, has proved, to quote the happy expression of Lewis Browne, "infinitely the most significant building ever erected by the hands of man."



**ASOKA**



*Important Events in Life of Asoka*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Ascended the throne of Magadha, India, in 272 B.C.                        | Filled with the "sadness of satiety," he became converted to the Buddhist gospel of peace.   |
| Murdered his brothers who had made claims to the throne.                  | Established a set of laws based upon the Golden Rule of Buddhism, which he inscribed upon pillars of stone—a Bible of granite that has been preserved down to the present day. |
| Waged a cruel and devastating war against Kalinga, a neighboring kingdom. |  |

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# Asoka

*Circa 250 B.C.*

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**A**SOKA is the only king on record who abandoned warfare in spite of victory. His grandfather, Chandragupta, had founded his dynasty on intrigue and murder. His father, Bindusara, was nicknamed Amitraghatta, "The Slayer of Men." But Asoka, who, like his predecessors, had begun his reign in trickery and in slaughter, ended it in wisdom and in mercy.

The city of Pataliputra, the capital of the Chandragupta dynasty, was one of the seven wonders of ancient India. The center of oriental conquest and commerce, it had spread its renown throughout Asia and Europe. Its power extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, from Ujjain to the Himalaya Mountains—a territory almost equal in size to the present-day British-governed India. Nearly every ruler in Asia paid his respects to the royal house of Pataliputra. For the king had a mighty army of a million men—four times as big as the entire British force in India today—and he was ready to swoop down upon any ruler who might be indiscreet enough, or luckless enough, to incur his displeasure.

Such was the kingdom into which Asoka was born. His

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

father, having heard of the wisdom of the Greeks, wanted to get him a Greek tutor. Accordingly he wrote to Antiochus, in Syria, to buy him a Greek professor and to send this professor along with his next cargo of raisin wine and figs. Whereupon Antiochus replied that he took much pleasure in sending him the raisin wine and the figs, but he regretted that he couldn't include the professor in his shipment, since it was not lawful for the Greeks to sell professors.

And so Bindusara had to content himself with giving his son a Hindu, instead of a Greek, education.

The youth of Asoka—the name means “Without Sorrow”—was an uninterrupted round of royal pleasures. His father made him a present of two provinces, and Asoka drew upon the revenues of these provinces for his private amusements and his public shows. He became celebrated through the length and breadth of Asia as a prince of extravagant tastes and an open purse.

When his father died (272 B.C.) he assumed the reins of the government and proved from the very start that the hand which had held the wine cup could also wield the lash. His coronation, we are told, was celebrated in an orgy of blood. For the Chandraguptra dynasty was young, and there were many claimants to the throne. It would seem that Asoka spared none of these claimants. The ancient historians tell us that he murdered ninety-nine of his brothers and spared only one—an obvious exaggeration, of course, but an exaggeration which probably contains a germ of truth. At any rate, we know that he did not become fully established upon his throne until three years after his father's death.

The first few years of his reign were a succession of cruelty, carousals and wars. He is pictured, during those years, as a “monster of pleasure and wickedness.” Reckless banquets in the court and hungry slaves in the fields. Palanquins of gold for the emperor's courtesans and rags and despair for the toiling

## ASOKA

masses. Horse races and bull races, animal fights and gladiatorial fights and royal hunts in which it meant death for any subject to trespass upon the course laid out for the emperor—these were among Asoka's favorite amusements in the early years of his reign. And, above all, the conquest of his foes. And excessive taxes to pay for his amusements and his wars. For this was the way of the ancient princes of India. Thus far Asoka was no better than his warrior father and grandfather had been before him.

And then, in 261, came the most cruel and the most decisive of his wars. Decisive in more ways than one. For it was not only to give him his greatest victory, but it was to change the course of his life. He waged this war against Kalinga, the kingdom that lay on the eastern shore of India. Dissatisfied with the enormous empire bequeathed to him by his father, Asoka must include this territory, too, within the boundaries of his insatiable ambition.

It was a difficult and costly job to crush this nation which was fighting for its independence. And the victory, when Asoka had finally succeeded in winning it, was one of the most celebrated in the annals of ancient India. Asoka's army had slain a hundred thousand, had carried off nearly twice that number into slavery and had brought starvation and disease to well over a million men and women and children.

He was now in the mid peak of his glory. If he went on he might attain to such heights of conquest as would dwarf even the exploits of Alexander. But Asoka did no such thing. His last victory had filled him with the "sadness of satiety." He had come, in the course of his travels as a conqueror, under the influence of Buddhism. Enough of victory. Enough of hatred and slaughter and glory. Asoka, the savage warrior, had become suddenly converted to the Buddhist gospel of peace—one of the strangest conversions in the entire history of the human race.

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### II

THIS conversion of Asoka may not appear quite so strange, perhaps, when we consider the similarity between the earlier careers of Buddha and himself. Buddha, like Asoka, had been the prince of a mighty empire. And, too, like Asoka, he had enjoyed a youth of thoughtless frivolity and reckless gaiety. And then, as he was riding one day through the countryside, he witnessed three pitiable scenes—a broken-down old man whose body was rotting away before his death; a beggar with a loathsome disease, and the unburied body of a dead man, swollen, discolored and covered like a heap of refuse with a swarm of flies. These scenes of human suffering aroused within the young prince an unsuspected chord of human sympathy. He determined to do everything within his power to solve the mystery of life and to mitigate the misery of death.

Accordingly he gave up his kingdom and set out on a humble pilgrimage in quest of wisdom. And one night, as he sat meditating under a Bo tree while the world lay sleeping at his feet, the veil that hung between heaven and earth was lifted from before his eyes, and he caught a glimpse of the Truth. From now on, Buddha was resolved to teach this Truth as he saw it—the meaning of destiny and the doctrine of the Good Life.

Here, briefly, is the philosophy of Buddha and his gospel of the Good Life as accepted by Asoka:

Every human soul, said Buddha, goes through many migrations in this world on its way to heaven. At first, under the influence of the ancient Hindu teachers, Buddha had followed the popular conception about the transmigration of souls. That is, he had taught that the individual soul is born over and over again, traveling from one body-prison to another, until finally, freed from the necessity of being born again, it dissolves into Nirvana, or heavenly bliss. His own soul, Buddha told his disciples, had once inhabited the body of a quail.

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This crude conception about the transmigration of the soul became refined into a more poetical idea as Buddha grew older. In his later philosophy he no longer represented the individual soul as undergoing a series of personal migrations. Instead, he began to point out to his disciples that each living person is like a torch whose flame is handed down in turn to another torch, and so on through the ages until at last it melts into the universal flame of immortal life. Or, to use his famous metaphor of the bells, each life is a note which is sounded in an open room and which causes similar instruments to vibrate with the same sound all the way down the corridors of time until at last the note is swallowed up in the universal harmony of heaven.

Stripped of its poetical imagery and reduced to its simplest terms this doctrine as taught by Buddha and as accepted by Asoka means that the consequences of every life are far reaching, and that every human being is an intimate part of all humanity.

And what has all this to do with the doctrine of the Good Life? Simply this. All of us are a family of brothers in a world of sorrow—and this relationship includes not only every member of the human race but all creatures that breathe and suffer and die. Every little thing was to Buddha (and, after his conversion, to Asoka) “a poem of pity,” and he understood with equal tenderness the language of human distress and the inarticulate cry of the beast. Like Moses, he gave his people ten commandments, and the first and most important of these was: “Thou shalt not destroy life in any form.” Since we have no power to create, we have no right to destroy. This was the cornerstone of Buddha’s teaching.

The other cardinal principles of his ethical system were moderation, patience and love.

*Moderation.* “Nothing too much,” enjoined Buddha upon his followers. He taught self-control as against self-indulgence. He was equally opposed to the intoxication of lust, the intoxication of power and the intoxication of conquest. All three alike lead

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to madness in the end. It is the sign of a diseased soul to be over-ambitious, to crave for mastery over the weak and for victory in war. For victory is the father of death and of hatred for our fellow men, which is worse than death.

*Patience.* How are we to overcome the thirst for conquest in the human heart? By the paradox of patience, said Buddha. By repaying hatred with kindness. For it is only in this way that you can get a world of quarrelsome children to grow up into civilized and peaceful men and women. He taught his people the heroism of suffering without inflicting pain and the courage of dying without killing. Above all, he taught them patience—the contemplative patience of the East—and tolerance. The Buddhist is one of the most tolerant persons on earth. Unlike the adherents of some of the other great religions of the world he has never shed a drop of blood in a “holy” crusade, and he has never persecuted a single infidel for the sake of Buddha.

*Love.* Buddha taught, not the glory of God, but the power of love. It was his purpose “to flush the world with love.” He had given up a throne to live among the disinherited. The very last act of his life was to bless a beggar who came to him for words of comfort. Buddha had reached the age of eighty. Illness had overtaken him while he was eating at the house of a blacksmith—one of the least of his disciples. Dragging his tired body into the fields, he asked his followers to place him upon a bed of leaves. He implored them not to blame the blacksmith for his illness.

Then, as his life was ebbing away, he called to his side the outcast who had come to beg for the alms of a few gentle words. The hand of the dying prince sought the hand of the beggar, and the last word he spoke was a word of pity for a brother in sorrow.

### III

SUCH was the prince, and such the gospel, that inspired the latter years of Asoka’s transfigured life. He did not, like Buddha,

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abandon his throne, but he used it as an instrument for the lifting of the burdens of his people. And he did this in a most practical manner. He established a new set of laws based upon the Golden Rule of Buddhism, and he inscribed these laws upon pillars of stone throughout the length and breadth of the land—a permanent Bible of granite that has been preserved down to the present day.

The various versions of this Bible, though differing in minor respects from province to province, were in the main essentials alike. The principles upon which Asoka re-established “the kingdom of heaven on earth,” as enunciated in his Rock Edicts, were fourteen in number. They dealt with the duties of men and the rights of all living creatures. Following is a brief summary of these duties and rights:

I. All life, declared Asoka, is sacred. From now on there shall be no more slaughter—of men for military glory or of animals for the sacrificial altar or for the royal table. Simplicity, based upon gentleness, shall now be the rule both in high places and in low.

II. The well-being of all living things shall be the duty of the individual and of the state. To provide for this practical measure Asoka ordered the digging of wells and the planting of shade trees through all the highways of the land and the cultivation everywhere of medicinal herbs and roots and flowers “for the healing and the comfort of man and beast.”

III. All the people of the land are to exercise obedience to their parents, liberality to their friends, respect for their teachers and economy in their private and their public affairs. “Spend little, save little, borrow little and exploit not at all.”

IV. Practice, as well as preach, piety. And, to set an example to his subjects, the king went on in this edict to explain how he had transformed his own avarice into charity, his hatred into compassion and his military pageants into religious pilgrimages. “And, as I have done,” concluded this edict, “I exhort my sons



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and my grandsons and my great-grandsons to do, so that their people shall learn by their words and benefit by their deeds.”

V. Follow the difficult paths that lead to the good deed, rather than the easy paths that lead to the evil deed. And, to establish this theory upon a practical basis, he appointed special officers to teach the elements of law and—what was more important—the principles of justice. Especially justice to the poor and the aged, the humble and the weak.

VI. Be prompt in everything, especially in your eagerness to further the welfare of your fellow men. Here again Asoka fortified his precept by his own example. He declared that he would never be too busy to hear a complaint or to redress a wrong—whether he was at table in the dining room or resting in his bedroom or walking in his garden or riding in his carriage.

VII. Let friendliness be the rule for all. Cultivate a *generous* heart if you can afford to dispense charity, a *grateful* heart if you are constrained to receive it. For true charity is not a giving but a sharing. The excess of one is the property of all.

VIII. Organize missions, not only to spread religion but to distribute alms. Carry to your brother food for his hungry body as well as nourishment for his hungry soul.

IX. In this edict, Asoka spanned the bridge between good breeding and good morals, between etiquette and ethics. He called it the Edict of True Ceremonial, and he addressed it especially to the women of his kingdom. “Cease the frivolous occupations of your idle moments,” he said, “your gossiping and your gambling and your flirting. Spend your time, rather, in the more profitable—aye, and the more pleasurable—pastime of devising friendlier laws for the alien and humaner treatment for the slave.”

X. Obey the law when it is good. Ask your king to change it when it is bad. Therein lies true glory for the individual and the state.

XI. Spare all living things.

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XII. Exercise the principle of tolerance. You exalt your own religion by treating kindly the adherents of other religions. You injure your own religion by persecuting the adherents of other religions.

XIII. This edict contains a full account of Asoka's conversion and his philosophy. "Directly after the annexation of Kalinga"—we are quoting a brief summary of this edict—"His Majesty was stricken with remorse for having conquered it. For the conquest of a country involves the maiming and the killing and the enslavement of its people. This is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty. . . .

"The conquest of a country leads to the oppression of a people whose religion may be different from yours. And this, too, is a matter of regret to His Sacred Majesty. . . .

"His Majesty, therefore, has resolved to do no more violence but to return good for evil. And he bids his people also to turn from their evil ways. For His Majesty desires that all living things shall have security and justice, peace of mind and mercy and joy.

"And this, in the opinion of His Majesty, is the greatest victory—the victory over your own hatred. . . . This sort of conquest leads not only to the greatest glory but to the greatest happiness.

"This is the reason why His Majesty has prepared these granite tablets and inscribed upon them the Law of Piety, the Law of Mercy, the Law of Peace. This way, and this way alone, lies happiness, in heaven as well as on earth."

XIV. The last edict is an epilogue—a recapitulation of the other thirteen edicts and an apology for any repetitions of thought that may have appeared in the other edicts. For only by repetition, explains Asoka, can the "honeyed sweetness of Mercy" become established. "Repetition brings conviction."

This, then, is the Granite Bible of Asoka, the Hindu Moses who led his people out of the wilderness of war into the Canaan

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of a new, or rather *renewed*, religion of peace. It was Buddhism translated into a practical code. And in so translating it, Asoka transformed Buddhism from an Indian sect into a world religion. The words of Asoka are but another formulation of the universal truth as propounded by Zoroaster, Isaiah, Jesus, Mohammed, Bahauallah—all the great prophets of all the great religions. Different tongues expressing a single truth—the universal brotherhood of man. Like these other prophets, Asoka “fused all the disunited myriads of men into a common faith.” He was one of the first international bankers in the moral world. For he established a basic unit for the world-wide exchange of spiritual commerce—an international, interracial and interreligious golden currency of love.

And in this currency, come oppressor, come dictator, there can never be any depreciation.

# **JULIUS CAESAR**

*Important Dates in Life of Julius Caesar*

- 100 B.C.—Born in Rome.
- 87 B.C.—Caesar's father died.
- 84 B.C.—Assumed the "toga virilis."
- 81 B.C.—Served his first military campaign in the East under Minucius Thermus.
- 63 B.C.—Elected *Pontifex Maximus*.
- 58 B.C.—Led successful war against the Helvetii, a Celtic people inhabiting Switzerland.
- 56 B.C.—Invaded Brittany.
- 55 B.C.—Caesar crossed the Rhine over a bridge he constructed in ten days.
- 54 B.C.—Caesar invaded England.
- 51 B.C.—Caesar reduced Gaul to a province.
- 49 B.C.—Caesar crossed the Rubicon to fight his political enemies in Italy.
- 48 B.C.—Elected consul. Pursued Pompey to Egypt. Met Cleopatra and remained with her for nine months.
- 47 B.C.—Proceeded to Asia Minor, where he "came, saw and conquered."
- 46 B.C.—Returned to Italy. Was made dictator for ten years.
- 44 B.C.—Murdered in the Senate House at the foot of Pompey's statue.

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# Julius Caesar

100 B.C.—44 B.C.

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**H**E WAS born (100 B.C.) into a country which for several generations had been engaged in the business of national aggrandizement through international slaughter. The Roman legions were blazing a trail of conquest and bloodshed among all the weaker nations of the world. And within the city of Rome itself there was a constant wrangling and rioting among the politicians for the mastery of the state. One after another they came—Marius, Sulla, Pompey—and each of them was elected to the supreme magistracy in the state through a ballot of brickbats and clubs and daggers. Every election in Rome was a battle, and he who had the largest following of thugs and cut-throats managed to win the day. It was a case of everybody for himself and nobody for his country. The personal quarrels of the leading politicians of Rome had plunged the republic into a long series of “civil” wars, as the polite historians have called them. In reality they were nothing more than uncivil butcheries.

Such was the environment into which Caesar was born. And he was a typical product of this environment. He had the dash, the brilliance, the effrontery, the daring, the ambition, the

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greed and the heartlessness of the conquering Roman to the nth degree. As a mere boy he had been kidnaped by a band of pirates. He punished them by reading his poetry aloud to them, and he jokingly promised them that as soon as he was ransomed he would return with an army and crucify them. He kept his promise.

His brilliant recklessness both amazed and terrified his countrymen. When he was still in his twenties he secured his election, by force, to the high priesthood. Already a number of people, among them the orator Cicero, began to suspect that he had designs upon the government. "But," writes Cicero, "when I see his hair so carefully arranged, and observe him adjusting it with one finger, I cannot imagine that it should enter into such a man's thoughts to subject the Roman state." Cicero was to learn later on that he was not a very good reader of Caesar's thoughts.

Caesar was not only the high priest of Jupiter, but he was also one of the most ardent devotees of Venus, from whose divine loins he claimed direct descent. It was no secret that he seduced quite a number of the young matrons in Rome. Indeed, he was called *omnium mulierum vir*, "Everywoman's Husband." Yet he divorced his own wife because one of his friends had tried to make advances to her. He had no reason to believe that his wife had yielded to those advances, but Caesar's wife, he said, must be above suspicion.

He was not only "Everywoman's Husband," but, as the wags of Rome remarked, "Everyman's Wife." In his youth, when he spent a couple of years at the Bithynian court of King Nicomedes, he was generally referred to, *sotto voce*, of course, as "Queen Nicomedes."

His chief ambition, however, was not so much to shine in the boudoir but on the battlefield and in the senate house. His life's aim was to conquer and to rule. One day, as a young man, he went to see the statue of Alexander at Gades, the capital of



*King Solomon*





*Asoka*

## JULIUS CAESAR

Spain. This statue, erected on a high hill, represented the conqueror, one arm outflung toward the sea, gazing upon the waters and dreaming of the conquests that lay beyond their barrier. For a long time Caesar stood before the statue with tears in his eyes.

“Why do you weep?” asked one of the members of his suite.

“How can I help it,” replied Caesar, “when I consider that Alexander at my age had conquered the world, while I have not as yet done anything worth remembering!”

To conquer the world, like Alexander, to wade into immortality through rivers of human blood, that was the ambition of Julius Caesar.

But to do this he needed money. And in his youth he had none. On the contrary, his extravagance had thrown him into debt to the extent of a million and a half dollars. Somehow, he was determined, he must pay off his debts—and then he would enter upon a career of conquest such as even the Romans had never seen.

And so, in order to pay off his debts and to conquer the world, he entered upon a triple alliance with Crassus, the richest man of Rome, and with Pompey, her leading soldier. The First Triumvirate, the first historical ring of international gangsters, organized for the purpose of plundering their fellow men. These three glorified ruffians decided to cut the world, like a tempting cake, into three parts and to divide it among them. Caesar took possession of Spain, Crassus went into Asia and Pompey remained in Rome.

## II

WHEN Caesar formed his triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus one Roman senator, and only one, had the daring to enter a public protest. This man was Cato the Younger, a descendant of Cato the Elder and “the embodiment of the ancient virtues of the Roman Republic.” He stood up in the senate to plead

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for the preservation of this republic when Caesar, marching into the senate at the head of his secret police, shouted, "Arrest this man!"

There was a gasp of horror. Cato was carried off to prison, and one of the senators whispered to his neighbor: "I would rather be in jail with Cato than at liberty with Caesar." But he dared not utter these words aloud. Free speech was dead. To all intents and purposes, the Roman Republic was at an end.

The First Triumvirate, like most other gangster rings, was of comparatively short duration. Crassus soon died in battle, and Caesar and Pompey were glad to be rid of him. Now they could fight it out between themselves, without the awkward interference of a third party, for the mastery of Rome.

For the present, however, Caesar had in mind his more immediate project—the plunder of the world. Like Alexander, he was anxious to see how vast a territory it was possible for a single human being to conquer in a lifetime. He therefore renewed his alliance with Pompey, insured himself against Pompey's treachery by giving him his daughter, Julia, in marriage and plunged with his Roman legions into the devastation of new and unknown territory. From Spain he marched northward into Gaul (France), a country which provided him with many victories and much loot. Then he sailed across the channel into Britain—a feat of great daring, since many of his soldiers believed that Britain was not a real but a mythical country, and that Caesar, in taking them on this wild-goose chase into the unknown, would drive them over the edge of the world into the bottomless abyss. (For that was the geographical conception of the world in Caesar's day—a flat disk with a precipitous void beyond.) But Caesar paid no attention to the misgivings of his soldiers. He sailed into the west and came upon a real country which promised new conquests and fresh plunder.

His expedition into Britain, however, was a great disappointment to him. In the several battles which he fought there,

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Plutarch regretfully informs us, "he did more hurt to the enemy than service to himself, *for the islanders were so miserably poor that they had nothing worth being plundered of.*"

Caesar returned to Gaul, with its richer spoils, as a field more worthy of his predatory talents. For ten years he enriched himself and increased his glory by looting and killing the Helvetians, the Belgians, the Aquitanians and the Germans. The indecent story of his robberies and his murders (*Caesar's Gallic War*) is one of the most widely read books in the public schools. It is high time that our children were protected against its obscene and insidious poison.

Caesar's conquests in Gaul are summarized by Plutarch in a single sentence:

"In less than ten years he took by storm above eight hundred towns, subdued three hundred states, and, of the three millions of men who made up the gross sum of those with whom at several times he engaged, he killed one million and took captive a second."

And he did not confine his killing merely to those who fought against him. In one of his invasions he butchered nearly half a million women and children—a ghastly monument of human skulls to the military glory of Caesar!

### III

WHILE Caesar was riding roughshod over the Gauls, Pompey was trying to undermine his influence in Rome. The last link in their artificial friendship was broken, for Julia, the wife of Pompey and the daughter of Caesar, had died in childbirth. There was now open enmity between them. Pompey took steps to have himself appointed dictator. As soon as Caesar heard of this he hastened out of Gaul, crossed the Rubicon and marched with his cohorts against his native city. "It was said," observes Plutarch, "that the night before he passed the river (Rubicon),

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he had an impious dream that he was unnaturally familiar with his mother."

When Caesar approached the city the majority of the inhabitants, having weighed the relative merits of Caesar's and Pompey's claims to supreme power, decided to join the stronger—that is, Caesar's—side. A typical trait of the Romans, as is evident from the letter which Marcus Caelius, a pupil of Cicero's, sent to his old teacher: "Men should follow the more honorable part in times of peace. But when it comes to war, they should attach themselves to the more powerful part. . . . Caesar's army is incomparable, so that I am become a most hot, ardent Caesarian."

Realizing that his game was up, Pompey fled from the city. "Rome was like a ship deserted by her pilot." Caesar entered the gates, declared that Rome was in a state of anarchy and appointed himself dictator. He then made his way, with a file of soldiers, to the public treasury. He found it guarded by the young tribune, Lucius Metellus.

"Stand aside!" cried Caesar.

The tribune, whose public duty it was to forbid any act which to him seemed unlawful, refused to stir from his place. "This money belongs to the people, and I veto your right to take it."

"This money," retorted Caesar, "belongs to me. Open the doors, or I will have you put to death!"

Metellus grew pale but stood his ground. "You dare not!"

"Young man"—Caesar was now advancing upon him with drawn sword—"it is easier to do it than to talk about it!"

Metellus, now thoroughly frightened, gave way. Caesar broke down the doors of the treasury and helped himself to the public funds. He then delivered an eloquent oration to his countrymen, telling them that he was doing all this for their own benefit, and he promptly threatened to put to death anybody who dared to contradict him.

Having thus secured his position in Rome, he left a garrison

## JULIUS CAESAR

to watch it and went off with the rest of his cohorts in pursuit of Pompey.

His eagerness to overthrow his rival drove him at so furious a pace that even the hardest of his soldiers began to complain against him. "When, and where," they asked, "will this Caesar allow us at length to rest? If he has no regard for us who are human, let him at least take pity on our bucklers and our breast-plates, seeing how they are becoming worn out in the endless succession of battles which his inordinate ambition has forced upon us."

Being trained in the discipline of the Roman army, however, they soon stifled their complaints. They followed him to Thessaly (in the northern part of Greece) where he met Pompey's demoralized forces and routed them. Pompey escaped and sailed for Egypt.

Caesar lost no time but set sail right after him. When he arrived in Egypt the first thing that greeted his sight was Pompey's head stuck on a pole. His friends in Egypt had saved him the trouble of further pursuit by killing his son-in-law and sending him his head as a present. He scolded the Egyptians for their "barbarity" and rejoiced at his good fortune. Another obstacle removed in his march to the mastery of Rome.

## IV

BUT the civil war was not yet over. A number of Pompey's friends were still threatening trouble in various parts of the world. Before attending to them, however, Caesar stopped in Egypt for a time in order to straighten out the affairs of the Ptolemies. When King Ptolemy died he left a son who bore his own name, and two daughters, Arsinoë and Cleopatra. All three of them were fighting for the throne, and Cleopatra appealed to Caesar to help her in her claim against her brother and her sister. Caesar was an epileptic, bald-headed man of fifty-

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four at the time. Cleopatra was only twenty-one. He promptly yielded to her plea and set her up as the undisputed queen of Egypt.

Caesar had been the cleverest politician in Rome. He now became a tool in the hands of the cleverest woman in the world. Instead of returning to Rome and bringing the civil war to an end he lingered for several months in Egypt, unable to tear himself away from the spell of Cleopatra. He gave himself up, heart and soul, to this amatory interlude in the afternoon of his life. He accepted an invitation to sail up the Nile with her. Sitting in her "floating palace," with its purple draperies, its golden prow and its silver-tipped oars that flashed in rhythmic unison as the fifty black Nubian slaves dipped them into the water, he was lost in a dream of empire such as mortal man had never seen before. He would return to Italy and divorce Calpurnia. Then he would send for Cleopatra, and together, with the help of the gods whom he had once served as high priest, they would become the rulers of Rome, of Egypt, of the entire world.

But while Caesar lay dreaming in the arms of Cleopatra and listening to the songs of the Egyptian flute girls, Pompey's friends were not idle. They stirred up revolts in a number of the Roman provinces as well as in Rome itself. Unless Caesar bestirred himself, his own head, like Pompey's, would soon be decorating the top of a pole.

And so, with great reluctance, he put away the festive garments of Egypt and once more buckled on his military uniform. He promised Cleopatra, who was about to become a mother, that he would send for her as soon as their child was born.

He did not return to Rome at once, for he was somewhat ashamed of his recent idleness. His friends and admirers had expected him to win victories on the Egyptian battlefields. Instead he had won but a single victory—in the boudoir of the Egyptian queen. He wanted to bring back to Rome something

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more concrete than the good wishes of Cleopatra. He therefore set sail for Pontus, one of the rebellious Roman provinces in Asia Minor, and without much difficulty put down the revolt. And then, to prove to the Romans—and to his own satisfaction—that he was still the mighty Caesar of old, he sent home a report of his victory in three brief and blustering words: “*Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered).” They were the words of a god who was condescending to speak to mere mortals.

He was now ready to come back to Rome.

### V

CARRIED away by the news of his victory in Asia, the Romans received him with open arms. He declared himself dictator for ten years and sent for Cleopatra. She came with her infant, whom she had named Caesarion (Little Caesar). Along with her came another member of the royal house of Egypt—Cleopatra’s sister, Arsinoë—not, however, as a guest, but as a captive. Caesar paraded Arsinoë before the Romans in one of his numerous triumphal processions and then put her to death—as a special favor to Cleopatra. He installed Cleopatra in a palace across the Tiber—he did not quite dare to divorce Calpurnia—and together they began to take steps not only to be recognized as the king and queen of Rome but to be worshiped as two of its leading divinities.

Caesar had a temple built in his honor and two statues made after his image. He appointed a priest to pray and to offer sacrifices to him. He proclaimed that an oath taken in the name of Caesar was to be as sacred as an oath taken in the name of Jove. He passed a law to have his portrait carried in the gladiatorial processions together with the portraits of the other gods.

And in all these immortal honors he included Cleopatra. Right next to the image of “the Unconquerable God, Jupiter



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Julius (Caesar)"—for this is how he inscribed his latest statue—he set up an image of Cleopatra, "the Divine Sister of Venus."

This ridiculous assumption of heavenly attributes was offensive to a good many of the Romans. But even more offensive was Caesar's determination to become the king of Rome. He ordered a golden throne to be built for himself, and he was merely waiting for a favorable opportunity to assume the crown.

This opportunity came, as he thought, during one of the Roman carnivals. In order to test out the temper of the populace, he made arrangements with Mark Antony whereby the latter was to offer him the crown, half in earnest and half in jest, as an incidental part of the merrymaking. Antony did as he was told, but Caesar, noting the disapproval of the bystanders, decided to refuse the crown—for the present. The time, it seemed, was not yet ripe for the transformation of the Roman Republic into a Roman Empire. He would wait.

In the meantime two of Pompey's sons, Gnaeus and Sextus, were trying to stir up in Spain a revolt against Rome, or rather, against Caesar. The revolt threatened to become serious, and Caesar was obliged once more to put himself at the head of the army.

He crushed the revolt, killed the sons of Pompey and returned to Rome, where he appointed himself dictator for life.

And now he made the most fatal mistake of his career. He held a public celebration in honor of his victory over Gnaeus and Sextus Pompey. This was an inexcusable display of vulgarity on the part of Caesar. The Romans had stood everything from him, but they could not stand his savage gloating over the death of his fellow citizens.

Caesar, however, confident in his belief that a god can do no wrong, went serenely ahead with his plans. On the fifteenth of March, 44 B.C., he came to the senate house. He was in high spirits. The senators, he understood, were to elect him king of

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all the Roman provinces outside of the capital. After that he would without a doubt be declared the Emperor of Rome.

He walked into the senate house ready to be saluted with a crown. He received a salute of twenty-three dagger wounds instead.

And thus ended the career of one of the most gifted and one of the most dangerous ruffians in history. Lest we fall into the error of shedding sentimental tears over his assassination, let us remember that his insane ambition, before it was brought to an end by the dagger of Brutus, had cost the lives of 160,000 of his fellow Romans. Too great a price, by far, for the glory of any man.



**AUGUSTUS**

*Important Dates in Life of Augustus*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 63 B.C.—Born in Rome.   | 27 B.C.—Awarded civic crown and named Augustus.   |
| 58 B.C.—His father died.  | 12 B.C.—Elected <i>Pontifex Maximus</i> .   |
| 48 B.C.—Assumed the “toga virilis.”                                 | A.D. 4—Designated Tiberius as his successor. Renewed campaign against German tribes between the Rhine and Elbe. |
| 46 B.C.—Shared in African triumph of Julius Caesar, his uncle.      | A.D. 13—Gave command of the Rhine to Germanicus. Conducted census of Roman citizens.                            |
| 45 B.C.—Made patrician by senate. Designated heir by Julius Caesar. | A.D. 14—Died in the same room his father had died in before him.  |
| 43 B.C.—Appointed member of triumvirate.                            |   |
| 31 B.C.—Defeated Antony’s forces at Actium.                         |   |
| 30 B.C.—Antony and Cleopatra ended their lives.                     |   |
| 29 B.C.—Returned to Rome in triumph.                                |   |

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# Augustus

63 B.C.—A.D. 14

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**T**wo thousand years ago the senate was the citadel of freedom in the Roman Republic. Its enemies conspired to overthrow it, seize the power, rule the city and crush the great Roman experiment in self-government. One of the senators, the dissolute Catiline, organized a "Radical Front"—a rabble of desperate ruffians, men out of work and misguided patriots. A rival senator, the grizzle-headed orator, Cicero, gathered the necessary evidence, presented the case against Catiline and exposed him to the senate and to the country. It was one of the greatest sensations in the history of the republic. The senate house was filled to overflowing. One day, toward the end of the trial, a senior senator arrived late. A domestic incident had detained him. His wife had just been delivered of a son.

And now he rushed into the Hall of Freedom, unable to contain the great news within him. "A son, my wife has given birth to a son," he whispered to the colleagues who were sitting near by. "Good luck to freedom," replied one of the senators. And "Good luck to freedom" was the word passed around from group to group. The senators shifted in their seats and smoothed

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

the folds of their togas. A tall, wiry fellow, who had been listening intently to Cicero's accusation against Catiline, withdrew a cupped hand from his ear. He turned toward the senator who had just come in. "And so, Octavius, you have a son. And your brother-in-law, Julius Caesar, has a nephew." He smiled, and there was a volume of meaning in that smile. He focused his eyes on Cicero, who was now expatiating upon the times and the morals that could permit Catiline and his conspiracy to thrive undisturbed. He was challenging the senate to vote on his testimony that Catiline was an enemy of the state. The wiry legislator, he who a few moments ago had smiled his meaningful smile, turned to a short, bushy companion sitting beside him. "What is the use of all this hubbub and concern over our freedom? Suppose we get rid of Catiline. Suppose we execute him together with all his legion. Suppose we banish all the known and suspected enemies of the state. Rome will still bow before a master. If Julius Caesar goes . . . there is another Caesar, his nephew . . . born today to Octavius."

## II

THERE were strange legends about the newborn son of Octavius. He was no ordinary child. Long after his birth people related these legends from memory, or rather concocted them out of their fancy. When he was three years old, they said, his nurse had left his bedside for an instant one day, and when she returned the cradle was empty. She found him atop a lofty tower, so went the legend, lying with his face toward the sun. When he was five he had commanded the frogs on his father's estate to stop croaking, for their sound annoyed him when he tried to fall asleep. And the frogs, asserted the myth makers of Rome, had listened to him and remained still. A boy of remarkable promise, indeed! Short, slimly built, with a cold eye, a thin, delicate brow, small feet. When he was twelve his mother died

## AUGUSTUS

and he delivered the funeral oration over her body. He had a nasal voice, penetrating, emotionless, efficient. No blood, but colored water, ran through the little gentleman's veins. Dapper, able to take care of himself, a well-rounded, well-matured, delightfully tailored personality at twelve. The sun smiled on him. His uncle, Julius Caesar, called him his favorite nephew. At sixteen he adopted the toga and entered the dominion of manhood. But he had the ambition and the shrewdness and the cynicism of an adult long before the world looked upon him as a man. A bold and calculating eye had looked out upon the world even when he was a child playing with toys. Silent, always in the background of things, sitting on his mother's knee, playing by himself in a corner while others dominated the scene, he was capable of sizing up situations and defining things with a cynicism far beyond the reach of most children of his age.

He always managed to be in the right spot at the right time. He made himself conspicuous to the right people. He displayed himself with unobtrusive subtlety. He was ready to compliment his elders, to feed their ego with a magnificent simulation of eager, childish hero worship. He turned the apparent artlessness of his youth to account by winning the confidence of people older than himself. He was almost feminine in his intuitive grasp of masculine psychology long before he realized the implications of his power. He had an agile intellect, peculiarly sensitive to the emotions and the thoughts of those he desired to control. Impeccable in speech and manner, cold as a statue, seemingly impervious to his surroundings, secure in his own little world of astute and sagacious childhood, he was summoned at the age of sixteen into the much larger world of his uncle's politics. "Remember you are a Caesar," his uncle told him. And this fact the young man never forgot.

He accompanied his uncle on the latter's expedition to Spain. He walked beside him in his military triumph on his return to Rome. Caesar had hunted down Pompey, the man who had



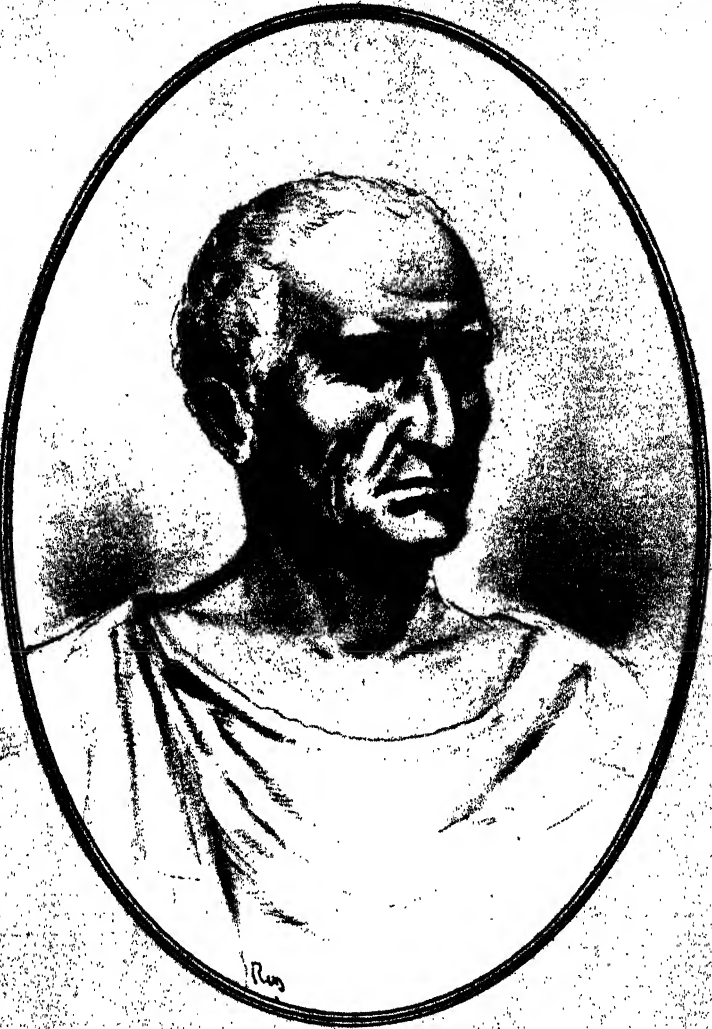
## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

challenged him for supremacy in the state. And now here he was, marching under the triumphal archway, accompanied by a band of musicians who piped and fluted martial strains and kept the hearts of the crowd a-flutter. What a picture of glory! Here rides the conqueror in his chariot, crowned with laurel, holding the scepter of victory in his hand, his lean and sun-tanned features wreathed in smiles; and here, walking beside his chariot, his young nephew, silent, apparently oblivious to his surroundings, partaking in the festivities in dutiful homage to his uncle, no visible expression on his face, his hands moving in mechanical rhythm by his sides, delicate hands, never eloquent, rarely engaged in pointing at people or in a gesture of any sort, head solidly front, stiffly erect, eyes, bolder than anyone realizes, staring inscrutably into space. A refined, respectable, reserved, self-reliant young man.

### III

NOT LONG after the triumph Caesar was assassinated, and young Octavius seized the reins of the government along with two other men.

Mark Antony and Lepidus were the two other members of this new triumvirate of plunder and revenge. When a strong and unscrupulous warrior seeks for civil power with the help of the army, and a few reckless freemen put a knife in his back and throw the whole state into confusion, the only integrating force left is the military. The senate is too weak to protect the civil order, martial law is declared in the emergency, those with the army behind them sit ruthlessly victorious at the helm, and freedom is stifled much more effectively than ever the adventurer Catiline could have stifled it. The three members of the Second Triumvirate were all friends of the murdered Caesar, all adventurers. Two of them, Octavius and Antony, were capable ruffians, but Lepidus was a harmless old fool who, by a



*Julius Caesar*



*Augustus*

## AUGUSTUS

strange election of fate, had fallen heir to a third portion of the conqueror's booty. He was sent to rule over the Roman possessions in Carthaginian Africa. Here in the hot climate, hoped the other two conspirators, he would lose all energy to look after his interests in Rome.

With Lepidus out of the way Octavius and Antony sat down together and drew up a list of their enemies for execution—each of them offering up a silent prayer that he might soon be able to include the other in this list. The world was too small a place for these two ambitious Romans. One of them must go. Antony was a solid, smiling body of a man with a tough constitution and a loud assertive air. He was a strong animal, admirably gifted to survive with the fittest, a blunt, virile, witty, brawling and blustering Roman with a robust appetite for the softer as well as for the sterner prizes of life. He was a good fellow, a “standout” at any party, a drinker at any bout, a lover in any boudoir, a soldier in any field of battle. Octavius, undersized, sickly and silent, sat like a dried-up plant before this blazing sun. They sat and looked at each other across the table, these two symbols of lust after power—the strong man doomed to be conquered by his very strength, the weak man destined to conquer by his very weakness. They studied the map of the world—the Roman world—from the British Isles to the Persian Empire. All this the Roman armies had added to the once insignificant little republic on the Tiber.

And so they sat there—Mark Antony, the young man in his middle forties, and Octavius, the old man in his early twenties—carving up the world as a tidbit for their voracious ambition and plotting each to put the other out of the way. And as they sat there, so the story goes, an eagle took off from his perch upon an army tent and drove his beak into the breast of a crow. The crow fell limp and lifeless to the ground within full sight of Octavius and Antony. Soothsayers saw an omen in this battle. They would quarrel, these two men of overtowering ambition,

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and the eagle would conquer the crow. But which of the two was to be the eagle—the man with the smile, or the boy with the frown?

The quarrel soon came about. Their armies split, a civil war broke out and thousands marched to an inglorious death for the greater glory of two. Antony was defeated at the Battle of Actium. Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, having lost her champion in Antony, now tried to exert her charms upon Octavius. Her eyes still held that dreamy possessiveness that had captivated the waning strength of Julius Caesar and the healthy lust of Mark Antony. But she was weary with thwarted ambition. She had hoped to rule Rome through these two men whom she had seduced. But she had been unable to seduce fortune. Now she was left alone with three children, one by Caesar, two by Antony—a woman in her late thirties. Even had she been younger she probably would not have succeeded in arousing the passion of Octavius. It seemed to be beyond the power of any human being to do this. For Octavius was devoid of all passion or affection. Or pity. He was determined to bring Cleopatra back to Rome—not, however, as his mistress but as his slave. He wanted to lead her as a captive in his triumphal march through the city streets. And so he promised her his protection and nothing more.

But Cleopatra robbed him of his triumph. She preferred the sting of the adder to the protection of Octavius. And Octavius, shrugging his narrow shoulders, entered the native city of Cleopatra, blessed the inhabitants, promised them an amnesty and then retired to his tent and issued secret orders for a wholesale massacre.

### IV

BEFORE his return to Rome Octavius visited the tomb of Alexander. With great ceremony the ambitious *living* conqueror marched up to the bones of the ambitious *dead* conqueror. The

## AUGUSTUS

soldiers leaned on their spears and looked on with an awed and pompous silence. Solemnly he peered into the coffin. A momentous meeting of the cold, searching eyes and the cold, sightless skull. Two supermen born to rule in life—and to rot in death. Octavius bent down and lifted the skull in his hands to look at it the more intently. "Bah," whispered one of the soldiers and turned away in disgust.

### V

FOR CENTURIES Rome had been a republic of free men. The Italians had been proud of their senate and jealous of their right to vote. When the various tribes of the Italian peninsula had been conquered by the Roman arms, they had been incorporated into the Roman citizenry under the patronage of the republic. They had been forced by the sword much as a son is forced by the rod in the hands of a strict, but not intolerant, father. Once the Italian peninsula had been incorporated, however, Rome began to cast greedy eyes across the sea. A trade war developed with Carthage. The little African state was swept clean. Her inhabitants were sold into slavery. Rome had committed a horrible blunder, and history was to learn the essential lesson that a state which enslaves others cannot herself be free. Carthage was the beginning of a crimson course that cut across the world. The army had become the instrument of the Roman state. Unscrupulous leaders had fought a series of civil wars with dictatorship as the prize. One by one they had struggled and lost and died. And now here was a young stripling of a man marching into Rome once more at the head of an army. The senators were in session on Capitoline Hill. Throughout the weary years of the civil wars they had been sitting thus, not daring to take sides. When Octavius entered the senate house, he drew his sword. With that gesture, the democratic experiment was at an end. This emaciated young man with

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the piercing eyes and the sickly pallor had a natural genius for presiding over final scenes of sickness and despair and death. When he was a little fellow he had delivered the eulogy over the body of his mother. Throughout his adolescent years he had witnessed the funerals of statesmen killed in the political wars of Rome. And now he presided, with his usual efficiency and decorum, over the obsequies of the republic.

He did much to soften the national blow. He kept the form of the old constitution. He gave the senate leave to continue its empty sessions. For he was a remarkably pious young man. The republic was duly buried and eulogized and consigned to heaven while Octavius settled down to the business of governing the earth. He made himself dictator for life and distributed large sums of money to silence the populace. Those who refused to stay silent he killed. Little by little he assumed the trappings of royalty, until finally the senate sent a delegation to him requesting that such an august prince should assume the title of Augustus. He blushed and told them never to dare to mention such a request again. He didn't care to blaspheme the gods by arrogating to himself so sublime a title, he told them. Then he sent them about their business. But with the thought of his own relationship to the gods always in his mind he built spacious and dazzling temples to the Olympian family. And, by a simple association of ideas, he put on high-heeled shoes to add a few inches to his miserable stature.

He was a cautious man. He made sure, as far as possible, that the dice were always loaded in his favor in his little match with fate. He had the good sense to realize that, though the tenure of his dictatorship was founded on the army, the war-weary public desired peace more than anything else. He ruled Rome for forty-one years, and during most of that time the army did the greater part of its marching on dress parade. Peace for the people meant peace for Octavius. And Octavius was a man of peace. A scrupulous man. The people loved him—at least,

## AUGUSTUS

so they told him. It is true that he was a bit untidy in his dress. But what magnificent eyes! He seemed quite proud of them and never tired of looking deeply into the countenance of whatever person he was addressing, as if to magnetize and overpower him. The eyes alone were eloquent. The rest of him was just cold roast average. What a homespun king, the people said. What a nice ruler, except for the fact that he was a little careless about the way he combed his hair. What a model of virtue and restraint and abstinence!

But gradually pagan Rome was undergoing a holy ablution. It was witnessing the spectacle of an ordinary man assuming the prerogatives of an Olympian. When Octavius took over the office of high priest and censor of the public morals he was only a stone's throw from heaven. Cool as a block of marble, unemotional as a glacial formation, he began to appear to his people as a familiar, yet aloof, statue. And the people, unable to treat him as a man, demanded to worship him as a god.

For a time he continued to pretend a modest reluctance to be deified. Once, as he was witnessing a play in the Roman theater, a reference was made to his divinity, and the audience applauded uproariously. He stood up, rebuked the shouting populace and walked out of the theater. But the idea of his divine destiny haunted him. In his heart of hearts he regarded himself as a god.

A strange personality for the role of a god! For he still led a frugal life, slept on a hard cot in the palace and wore homespun clothes made by his sister. After all he was the son of an African baker—a simple, prudent moneygrubber who bargained sharply and knew his loaves of bread. But if divine honors could be bestowed upon Vulcan, the blacksmith, why not bestow them upon Octavius, the son of the baker? And so, finally, he consented to adopt the name of Augustus—"The Exalted One."

Thus it was that the baker's son looked into the mirror one day and found himself face to face with a god. Soon the legend



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arose that he had been seen walking with a halo of rainbow colors around his head. Several people dreamed—so they said—that Jupiter himself had placed the divine kiss upon him.

And, appropriately enough, together with the divine honors of the pagan gods he began to acquire some of their dissolute appetites. Abandoning the abstinence of his earlier days, he despatched secret agents throughout the empire to bring him virgins for his royal couch. He also developed, as he grew in stature in his own eyes, a disturbing zest for committing adultery. His closest friends explained that he resorted to such debauchery, not in order to indulge his personal lust, but to discover the plots of his enemies through their wives. His friends had a difficult time, however, when they tried to explain away the following episode: During a state dinner he was seized by a sudden whim to snatch the wife of one of his cabinet officers from the table and to force her into his bedroom. A few minutes later he brought her back to her husband, trembling and dishevelled, in time to continue the state dinner.

He selected his state officials for their ability to help him most efficiently and most discreetly with his lecherous adventures, since it was inadvisable to alarm his people with too much publicity on the matter. As time went on he developed another appetite—a passion for gambling. And he always played for tremendous stakes. He was a moderate drinker, however, and, what is most important, he never allowed his private recreation to disturb his public reputation. His toga was as simple as the average citizen's. His method of educating the public was as simple. He burnt all the Greek and Roman books dealing with the subject of freedom. He hired only those poets who sang the praises of Augustus and the empire. He was the supreme arbiter of taste and the supreme judge of the state. Indeed, his bench had the sacredness of a final judgment seat. Like all astute jurists he was interested in eliminating crime by preventing

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crime—especially crime, either real or suspected, against his own sacred person. Once, when a senator approached him in the palace, he was in doubt as to whether the man intended to compliment or to assault him, and, to be on the safe side, he had the senator's eyes plucked out, and then he ordered him to be put to death. His official version of the senator's disappearance was that he had been banished from the country, that a great storm had wrecked his ship and that he had been seized by robbers and killed. On another occasion he frowned upon a senator in so stern a manner that the sensitive fellow flung himself over a cliff.

He never failed, however, to state his good intentions in public. "May it be permitted me to have the happiness of establishing the commonwealth upon a safe and sound basis," he was fond of declaring. That is, safe and sound for himself. Outwardly he was affable, except on those all-too-frequent occasions when he suffered from dysentery. The irony of it was that with all his divine ambition he had but a human body. And a sickly one at that. There are times when divinity wears strange outward garments. His face was pock marked, and he was tormented by a constant itch. He had a weak left hip, and he suffered unseasonably from bladder trouble, a fact which often caused him great embarrassment while he was delivering speeches. He was bothered perpetually with a cold in the head, and he was obliged to give most of his commands in a snuffle. Because of his skin disease he never took a bath. Perhaps his aloofness from men was due more to this ablutionary deficiency than to any divine heritage. Who knows what are the inner forces that constitute the real personality of a man? History does not even begin to plumb the dark physiological and psychological recesses that motivate the leading characters of her drama. In the case of Augustus the Romans failed to understand the character of the man. And for want of understanding they made him a god.

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### VI

AND so he strutted over the stage of life like an Olympian, while backstage, in the privacy of his dressing room, his sister wrapped him in a flannel stomacher and his slaves scratched his itching back. The poets and the historians of his day, Virgil, Horace, Livy, ignored his failings and exaggerated his majesty. And, throughout his public conduct, he maintained this fiction of his exaggerated majesty. He never allowed anybody to laugh in his presence. It was indeed no laughing matter that one such insignificant invalid should have the power of life and death over three quarters of the inhabitants of the world.

And at last he went the way of all sickly mortality. One day as he was addressing his soldiers on the Campus Martius—the military parade ground of Rome—a streak of lightning struck a portion of the statue erected in his honor. The first letter of the inscription, Octavius, was obliterated, so that the name was left beginning with the letter *C*. Since this letter is the Roman numeral for 100 the soothsayers interpreted the portent as a warning that Augustus would live only a hundred days. Within this space of time he was seized with the old, familiar attack of dysentery. He was in the midst of a trip through his dominions on the Adriatic when the attack occurred. Now he lay in his carriage and stared sullenly at the ceiling as the servants carried him back to Rome. It wasn't strange for him to be carried thus. All his life he had made his journeys at night. That was an ideal time for him to travel, since he couldn't sleep. He was afraid to lie still in the dark. He had seen a good deal of life from his back—staring upward into the flat surface of a ceiling or the blue dome of the sky. And so he hardly minded this new attack, even when the doctors finally decided that he was too weak to be moved and ordered his attendants to transfer him to a stationary bed. Now for the last time he put away the broad-brimmed hat which had served to protect him from the sun on



*Constantine*



*Charlemagne*

## AUGUSTUS

his travels. He would never need it again. He called his slaves and his courtiers to his bed and looked at them steadfastly with his eyes. They were brilliant still.

“Do you think,” he asked them earnestly, “that I have acted my part well? If so, applaud me as I die.”

The applause came, vociferous and insincere. But Augustus was no longer able to hear it.



**CONSTANTINE**



*Important Dates in Life of Constantine*

- 272—Born in upper Moesia (Serbia).  
306—Acclaimed as Augustus by Roman army at the death of his father.  
307—Married Fausta, daughter of Maximian.  
312—Defeated superior forces of Maxentius.  
313—Issued Edict of Milan, tolerating Christianity throughout empire.  
325—Presided over Christian Church Council of Nicaea.  
326—Executed his son and shortly afterward his wife.  
327—Moved seat of empire from Rome to the East and founded Constantinople, his new capital.  
335—Executed his nephew, Licinius. Divided empire between remaining three sons and two nephews.  
337—Died at Ancyrona, a suburb of Nicomedia.

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# Constantine the Great

272-337

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**W**E KNOW very little about the character or about the private life of Constantine. Several of the historians, from Zosimus down to Van Loon, have portrayed him as a bully and a ruffian. Several others, like the ancient Eusebius, Lactantius and Eutropius and even the modern H. G. Wells, have invested him with the halo of a saint. In order to get an approximately life-like picture of the man we shall be safe, we believe, to follow the advice of Edward Gibbon—to accept all the good things said about him by his enemies and all the bad things said about him by his friends.

Using this candid mixture of dark and light pigments for our portrait of Constantine, we get the story of a man who had his despicable as well as his admirable features, and whose personality as a whole was one of the most interesting in the annals of ancient Rome.

His father, Constantius, was a Roman governor under the Emperor Diocletian, and his mother, Helena, was the daughter of a Serbian innkeeper. His mental education was subordinated to his military training so that he grew up practically illiterate.

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But he had an innate talent for organizing and a driving ambition for personal glory. When Diocletian died he entered the general scramble for the succession to the throne, and he came out on top through the approved Roman method of murdering all the other candidates.

Tall, magnetic, courageous, affable to his friends but cruel to his enemies, long headed and cool and sagacious yet driven restlessly onward by his insatiable ambition, he lopped off the heads of his more aspiring subordinates, one by one, until he stood forth as the undisputed ruler of the Roman Empire. He abolished the senate, and he appointed in its place a body of imperial spies to ferret out and to punish the slightest symptoms of disaffection among his subjects. He imposed a system of taxation which brought "tears and terrors" to his citizens. He ordered an imperial wardrobe of so amazing a splendor that, compared to it, the royal robes of Nero would have looked like the rags of a peasant. He adorned his head with wigs of various hues and his body with a profusion of collars and bracelets, of diamonds and pearls. He assumed, in addition to the conventional name of Augustus, a flock of ponderous and absurd titles—such as "Your Sincerity," "Your Gravity," "Your Exalted Personality," "Your Sublime and Wonderful Magnitude," and so on and on. He surrounded himself with chamberlains, chancellors, masters of the purse, commanders of the bodyguard and a number of other functionaries which he created after the model of the Persian courts. He compelled his citizens to prostrate themselves in his presence as if he were an Asiatic potentate. He removed his court from Rome to Byzantium, a city on the Bosphorus, renamed it Constantinople (the City of Constantine), and made it the new capital of the Roman Empire as being a more worthy residence for a king who aspired after oriental splendor.

He became the most absolute of the Roman despots and the father of the whole obnoxious brood of European dictators and

## CONSTANTINE

czars and kaisers. For, as Professor Morey points out in his *Outline of Roman History*, "we should remember that it was not so much the early imperialism of Augustus as the later imperialism of Constantine which reappeared in the empires (and, we may add, the dictatorships) of modern Europe."

### II

THE AMBITION of Constantine had gone to his head, and his every new access of power drove him to thirst for still more power. He was intoxicated with glory, and his intoxication, uncurbed by any internal discipline or external control, led him into acts of shameless barbarity. He had a son, Crispus by name—a young man represented by impartial historians as "an amiable and accomplished youth." Crispus was extremely popular with the court, the army and the people. Constantine regarded this popularity as too dangerous an obstacle to his own ambitious plans. Accordingly he confined him almost as a prisoner at the court and subjected him, whenever the opportunity presented itself, to the ridicule of the courtiers. The young prince naturally resented this unfair attitude on the part of his father, and sometimes he took occasion to express his resentment to his more intimate friends. The words of Crispus, exaggerated in their journey from mouth to mouth, came finally to the ears of Constantine. Whereupon the emperor accused his son of concocting a secret conspiracy against his life. He invited his informers to watch his son, and he offered them large rewards if they brought him any proof of his son's treachery. The informers, eager for the reward, manufactured a network of lies in which they implicated the young prince. Constantine began to look upon his son as his most irreconcilable enemy.

And now we come to the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Constantine's reign. There is a grand carnival in

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which the entire royal family is taking part. Banquets, speeches, carousals, torchlight parades and gladiatorial games. And then, the climax of the carnival—the emperor orders the arrest of his son. A brief and dramatic examination, a hasty verdict of guilty, and the execution of Crispus.

Together with Crispus, Constantine also ordered the execution of his nephew, Licinius, whose only crime, like that of Crispus, was his unfortunate relationship to the emperor.

But Constantine was not as yet through with his family murders. His suspicion of everybody's honesty, a suspicion nurtured largely by his own suppression of everybody's liberty, led him to accuse his wife, Fausta, of an illicit connection with an attendant of the imperial stables. As a punishment for this misdemeanor, whether real or imaginary, the emperor condemned her to suffocation by steam in her royal bath.

A rather familiar, if disgusting, picture of the average Roman emperor. Though more absolute, he was no less—nor more—cruel than his royal predecessors.

### III

BUT now let us look at the other side of the picture. His mother, as we have seen, was the daughter of an innkeeper. Brought up as a Christian, she tried to inspire her warrior son with the four cardinal principles of Christianity—justice, mercy, peace and tolerance. Though she failed on three points, she was successful on the fourth. From early childhood Constantine had learned the value of tolerance. His mother had told him the stories of the Christian martyrs, and he grew up with a feeling of admiration for their heroism if not for their faith. Christianity, to him, seemed to be a religion of courageous warriors, and Christ appeared as the greatest of the war gods. One day, as he was marching against Maxentius in his struggle for the mastery of the Roman empire, he saw (as he proclaimed) the image of a

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huge fiery cross in the heavens. Underneath the cross were the words, *In hoc signo vinces*—By this sign thou shalt conquer. Whether he fabricated this story of the cross or dreamed about it at night, he adopted Jesus as his patron divinity and accepted Christianity as the state religion of Rome. It was a strange sort of Christianity that this soldier-prophet introduced into the Roman Empire—a religion of arrogant and aggressive fighters and not of meek and peace-loving nonresisters. It was no longer “onward, Roman warriors.” The new battle cry of Rome was “onward, Christian soldiers.” And at their head—so imagined the naïve emperor—marched the Sorrowful Carpenter of Galilee with a heavy wooden cross upon His back.

But, in spite of Constantine’s perverted vision of Christianity, he did terminate the persecution of the Christians. From that time on the worship of Christ need no longer be concealed in the caverns and the catacombs of Rome. It was brought out into the open light of the sun where it could grow and expand and spread its seeds throughout the world. Thanks to the tolerance of Constantine the Church Oppressed had become the Church Triumphant. It is a pity that for a time, owing to the complexion it took on from its military protector, it also became the Church Militant. The soldier’s uniform, however, has never become acclimated in the house of the gentle Prince of Peace.

## IV

VARIOUS MOTIVES have been advanced to explain Constantine’s adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the state. Was his conversion, as some historians maintain, due to benevolence? Or, as others insist, to remorse? Or political acumen? Or military necessity? Or mental conviction? Or moral rebirth? Perhaps all these motives had something to do with it. The human personality is a strange mixture of contradictory elements, and both the historian and the psychologist find themselves at a loss

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when they try to analyze a human decision into its component parts. Perhaps it is best, especially at this late date, to accept the fact of his conversion and to stop speculating about the factors that led up to it. One thing, however, seems fairly certain. Constantine, in spite of his illiteracy, was a genius in political administration. The Christians, he knew, were a sect who believed in passive obedience to the law. His throne, he believed, was safe so long as he encouraged among his subjects a religion which taught them to "grant unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's."

Furthermore, he realized that Christianity was a symbol of solidarity throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire. For all the Christians, wherever they might live, looked to a centralized source of moral law. It was but a simple step to superimpose upon this centralized source of moral law a central seat of political government. Thus, through his encouragement of Christianity, he transformed its spiritual solidarity into a unifying and organizing political force. For lack of this unifying force the Roman Empire had been falling apart. The Christian faith, he hoped, would serve as a golden thread that would once more stitch the Roman provinces together into a concordant unit.

Unity through Christianity—that, it seems fairly certain, was one of Constantine's chief objectives in accepting the new faith. In this objective there was, of course, a large measure of self-interest. As a French poet has put it, "Constantine used the altar of the Church as a convenient footstool to his throne." Let us, however, be fair to Constantine. Nearly all our human acts are motivated by personal interest. But personal interest may, indeed generally does, lead to evil rather than to good deeds.

Furthermore, in the mixed motives of human conduct, the doing of noble deeds may very likely bring about the thinking of noble thoughts. The outward *acceptance* of a great faith, for whatever cause, may result, little by little, in an inward *devotion* to that faith. In the case of Constantine, at least, we know that

## CONSTANTINE

the teachers of the new religion exercised a great influence over his mind. Though unlettered himself, he became, under the promptings of Lactantius and Eusebius, a patron of literature, of philosophy and of art.

And so, in appraising the character of Constantine, we must not be blind to the few bright rays of nobility that shine out against the somber background of his vindictiveness and his cruelty. The human soul, like Joseph's garment, is a coat of many colors.

### V

IN HIS EFFORT to bring about political stability through spiritual unity Constantine organized a convention of the clergy (in 325) at Nice, a city not far from Constantinople. At this famous Council of Nicaea, the various doctrines about the Godhead and the Church were discussed under the presidency of Constantine. Though unable to understand Greek, the language in which the discussion was conducted, the emperor watched the proceedings carefully, asking the interpreters to explain the disputed points and especially noting the effects produced upon the audience by the various speakers. The chief point at issue was the question of the Divine Unity as against the Divine Trinity. Those who upheld the doctrine of the Unity were known as the *Arians*, because they followed the teachings of Arius. (The word is not to be confused with the modern term *Aryan*.) Those, on the other hand, who under the leadership of Athanasius sustained the doctrine of the Trinity, were called the *Trinitarians*. After a stormy controversy that lasted about nine weeks Constantine decided in favor of the Trinitarians, and their doctrine of the three-in-one Godhead of Father and Son and Holy Ghost was incorporated into the historic Nicene Creed.

In the Nicaean controversy, as in many of the other events in which Constantine had played a leading role, he aimed above



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all at organized unanimity. Whether or not he was aware of his mission, and regardless of his personal motives or his private conduct, Constantine had come as a stabilizing force into a world that had been rapidly disintegrating. He united a disunited age. And he established the Church upon a solid foundation of undivided doctrine at a time when it was necessary for the new religion to possess *wholeness* as well as *holiness* for its healthy growth.

Yet, though he had adopted the Trinitarian creed, Constantine was wise enough politically to bear lightly upon those who dissented. His motto was—religious concord through religious tolerance. When Athanasius tried to discriminate against the Arians the emperor banished him from Alexandria. And when the Trinitarians wanted to excommunicate Arius he ordered them to readmit him to communion. An excellent precept, this, for political as well as for religious harmony—to conciliate rather than to condemn those who may happen to disagree with us.

### VI

CONSTANTINE himself was not baptized into the Christian faith until just before his death at the age of sixty-four (in 337). His military organization became shattered into bits only a century and a half later. For its underlying basis was violence. But his religious structure has endured to the present day. Because its basic principle is peace.

**CHARLEMAGNE**

*Important Dates in Life of Charlemagne*

- 742—Born in the kingdom of the Franks.
- 768—Received half of kingdom on death of Pepin, his father. Carolman, his brother, received the other half.
- 770—Married the daughter of the king of the Lombards.
- 771—Repudiated marriage and married Hildegarde, a Swabian. Appropriated brother's kingdom at his death.
- 774—Conquered the Lombards. Acclaimed as Patrician of Romans.
- 774-799—War with the Saxons, whom he conquered and converted to Christianity.
- 800—Crowned Emperor of the West in Rome.
- 806—Divided his realms between his three legitimate sons.
- 814—Died at Aachen.

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# Charlemagne

742—814

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**L**IKE Alexander and Caesar, Charlemagne has come down to us through the legendary mists as a giant of superhuman proportions. The poets and the historians of military glory, the romanticists who sit in their bedrooms and sing about the battlefields, have a way of measuring a man's greatness by the number of his fellow men that he slaughters in his wars. They have idolized Charlemagne because of his military successes. We shall find him, we believe, a gilded idol with feet of clay and a heart of steel.

He was, let us admit, a man of extraordinary ability. His physical strength and his activity were something to marvel at. His administrative powers were unusual. His love for learning, though belated, was probably genuine. And his contribution to the spread of Christianity was estimable—though it would have been far more estimable had he furthered his faith through persuasion rather than through persecution. When all this is said Charlemagne still stands forth as a man to whom the lives of his fellow men were of no greater importance than the lives of a swarm of insects. In the path that he marked out for

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

his personal glory he trampled over them with as much consideration as though he were trampling over an anthill.

### II

CHARLEMAGNE was a product of his time. Which means that his time was not a pleasant thing to contemplate. The Roman Empire had been torn into pieces, and a number of adventurers were growling and scrapping amongst themselves, like infuriated dogs, for the possession of the various pieces. As a result of these continual brawls a number of barbarian principalities were beginning to arise in Europe—the kingdom of the Suevi, of the West Goths, of the East Goths, of the Saxons, of the Bavarians, of the Lombards and so on. One of the strongest of these kingdoms was that of the Franks. Having started in what is now Belgium, it had spread over much of the territory known today as France and Germany but called at that time Neustria and Austrasia.

In this kingdom, as in all the other barbarian kingdoms of that day, there was a constant struggle amongst the various military leaders for the supreme power. Very often the king was king only in name. The real ruler was the so-called major domo, or mayor of the palace. One of the most powerful of these major domos was Pepin the Short, whose wife was known to her contemporaries as Big-Footed Bertha. Pepin was the virtual dictator of the Franks, and the king was merely a puppet in his hands. But Pepin was not satisfied with being the ruler merely in fact; he wanted to be recognized as such also in name. And so, one day, he sent a delegation to the Pope to ask who was the real king of the Franks—the man who wielded the power or the man who wore the crown. To this question there was but a single answer, especially in view of the fact that Pepin's soldiers were ready, if necessary, to enforce this answer. Pepin was anointed and crowned emperor of the Frankish kingdom.

## CHARLEMAGNE

When Pepin died (in 768) he bequeathed his kingdom to his two sons, Charles and Carloman. Immediately the two brothers began to fight for supremacy. This fight, luckily for Charles, came to a sudden end when his brother, Carloman, died. Charles was now the undisputed king of Neustria and Austrasia.

But Charles was not satisfied. For he was afflicted with that strange mortal disease, earth hunger—a disease which kills not the victim who suffers from it, but the unfortunates who happen to lie in his path. Charles entered upon an insatiable campaign for land and more land. He killed many thousands of people and won for himself the name of Charlemagne (Carolus Magnus—Charles the Great).

### III

CHARLEMAGNE was a shrewd politician as well as an able general. He tried to win his territory through intermarriage as well as through military conquest. Accordingly he offered to marry Desideria, the daughter of Desiderius, king of the Lombards, in northern Italy. The fact that he already had a wife did not stop Charlemagne. Pope Stephen objected to the marriage, but Charlemagne brushed the objection aside. He took his new wife without divorcing the old and proceeded to lord it over his father-in-law, Desiderius.

But King Desiderius was a proud man who didn't like to take his orders from any other king. Charlemagne was enraged at this insubordination. He was determined to teach his father-in-law a lesson and, incidentally, to annex Lombardy to his own expanding kingdom.

With this in view he repudiated Desideria, took a third wife, the Swabian Hildegarde, and marched with his new Swabian allies against the kingdom of Desiderius.

The reputation of Charlemagne as a warrior had already struck terror into the hearts of his contemporaries. We have a

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vivid, if naïve, picture of his advance on Desiderius in the *Life of Charlemagne* as written by the Monk of St Gall:

“Now it happened that one of Charlemagne’s nobles, called Otker, had incurred the anger of the terrible Emperor and had fled for safety to Desiderius. When they heard of the approach of Charlemagne’s army these two men went into a lofty tower and gazed into the distance in the direction of the Frankish kingdom.

“And soon the baggage wagons appeared. Swift as the whirlwind they advanced, and at their head rode a mighty warrior. And Desiderius said to Otker: ‘Is that Charlemagne?’ And Otker replied: ‘Not yet.’

“And then there came the mighty hosts of the tributary nations, each of them led by a man in shining armor. ‘Surely,’ said Desiderius, ‘Charlemagne is riding amongst these forces.’ But Otker replied: ‘Not yet, not yet.’

“Whereupon Desiderius fell into great alarm and said: ‘What is he like? And what will happen when he comes into our midst?’ And Otker answered: ‘You will see what he is like when he comes. As to what will happen to us, I cannot say.’

“And behold, as they were talking there galloped into sight a cavalcade of ferocious warriors—the picked battalions of Charlemagne’s army. And Desiderius, as he beheld them, cried in amazement and terror: ‘There is Charles!’ But Otker answered: ‘Not yet, not yet.’

“And Desiderius grew pale, and his knees trembled, and he said: ‘How, then, shall I know when Charlemagne arrives?’

“And Otker replied: ‘When you see a harvest of iron bristling in the fields, and the waters of the Po come flooding against the walls of your city like the billows of the ocean, then you will know that Charlemagne has arrived.’

“Hardly had he spoken these words when out the west there came a cloud which turned the day into night. And in the midst of the cloud rode a warrior whose armor glittered like a flash

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of lightning. His head was covered with an iron helmet, his hands were clad in iron gauntlets and his chest was protected by an iron breastplate. . . . His spear and his shield were of iron, and the steed he rode upon was iron colored and iron hearted. . . . And behind him came the rest of his soldiers—ironclad warriors with an iron determination to kill. ‘There,’ whispered Otker, ‘is the Charles that you were so anxious to behold.’ And, having said these words, he fell to the ground in a swoon.”

### IV

CHARLEMAGNE conquered the Lombards and then turned his attention to the Saxons in the northeast. He devastated their country in a series of annual raids lasting over a period of thirty years, and he cowed them by a “war of nerves” as well as by a steady pressure of arms. After decimating the population he converted the balance to Christianity—a method diametrically opposed to the principles of Jesus, who had taught the ideal of conversion through love. The gift that Charlemagne thus brought to the Church was no mean gift, to be sure, but it was offered with stained hands. He had failed to learn the lesson of the earlier missionaries who had spread Christianity as a gospel of peace and not as a religion of the sword. The Saxons, as their subsequent history proved, might have easily been persuaded to accept Christianity without the altogether unnecessary argument of Charlemagne’s mailed fist. Charlemagne, it would seem, was far more interested in plundering the Saxon lands than he was in saving the Saxon souls.

Yet we must remember the spirit of the times in which he lived. Gentleness was a rare virtue in those days. Charlemagne, though a Christian by profession, was really a pagan by inclination. He believed, and perhaps sincerely, in the Holy Book. But he did not understand it. It was difficult to hear the “still, small voice” of heaven in those days of political turmoil and



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the incessant clash of arms. Some of Charlemagne's advisers, especially the learned English priest, Alcuin of York, remonstrated with him against his "headstrong policy of forced conversion," but Charlemagne paid no attention to any such advice. His crude ear was not attuned to the gentle music of the Golden Rule.

When Charlemagne conquered the Saxons he instituted a practice which was to cause a great deal of mischief in later times. He transplanted a third of the Saxon male population into his own domains. What he tried to do was to strengthen his kingdom by holding thousands of hostages within easy reach of his arms. What he actually succeeded in doing was to weaken his kingdom by acquiring thousands of rebels within his own borders. These rebels and their descendants, shortly after Charlemagne's death, played no unimportant part in the breaking up of the Frankish Empire. Charlemagne proved the historic axiom that whatever is unjustly won is easily lost.

But Charlemagne had not learned this important lesson of history. Having conquered the Saxons, he proceeded to subdue the Slavs (in what is now Prussia, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia) and the Avars (in what is now Hungary). From Hungary he brought back a treasure of valuable ornaments sufficient to make up a load "of fifteen huge wagons drawn by four horses."

And then, having acquired his vast empire, he ordered his subjects to take a new oath of allegiance, and he compelled them all, including even the nobility, to prostrate themselves and to kiss his royal foot when they came into his presence.

### V

CHARLEMAGNE had no regard for his people, but he had a shrewd regard for his own convenience. And, in his shrewdness, he devised laws that curbed the recklessness of his subjects. These laws impressed upon them primarily the necessity of

## CHARLEMAGNE

implicit obedience to the king. But secondarily the laws helped to abolish many of the quarrels among the subjects and to produce a more efficient administration of the public affairs. For a time, at least, they introduced a semblance of harmony into the disorganized anarchy of medieval Europe. The weakness of these laws lay in the fact that Charlemagne based the safety of his empire upon the life of a single man—himself. When he died his empire died with him.

More important, because more permanent, than his legal code was his educational system. Here he made a real contribution to history. Though uneducated himself he had a great respect for learning. His conversations with the bishops opened up to his fertile imagination a mental world that was vaster, more interesting and perhaps more vital than the physical world he had conquered with the sword. He began to toy with this world like a child. He invited the most learned men of Europe to deliver to his courtiers lectures on rhetoric and philosophy and astronomy. Frequently he attended these lectures himself, and he listened with rapt attention to the unfolding of this strange world of knowledge. He even tried to learn to write. But this unfamiliar task, observes his friend and biographer, Eginhard, "was begun too late in life, and therefore Charlemagne made but little progress in it."

But, if he himself was illiterate, he insisted upon a systematic training on the part of the Frankish children, rich and poor alike. The discipline of a thorough education, he believed, would make them more obedient subjects and more efficient soldiers. Accordingly he opened a number of schools in his kingdom and especially the famous School of the Palace. To these schools he invited the best teachers from Italy, Ireland and England. All those who had "wisdom for sale" found a ready market at the schools of Charlemagne. Chief among these merchants of knowledge was Alcuin of York. This scholar and poet, educated in the famous Cathedral School of England, was

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a typical Britisher—a big man with a hearty smile, a healthy voice and a generous appetite for good food and good fellowship. He might have made an excellent prime minister in nineteenth-century England. And he did make an excellent superintendent of education at Charlemagne's court. He introduced into the Palace School the established curriculum of the English educational system, the seven liberal arts of grammar, rhetoric and logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. In addition to these, or rather, as an all-embracing framework for these, he drilled all the boys in an eighth and not so liberal art—blind obedience to the king's will. For Alcuin, like Charlemagne, was a product of his time. The freedom of the individual was a thing not even dreamed of in the philosophy of the ninth century.

As was to be expected, the precedence of rank was meticulously observed in the Palace School. At this school there were both rich boys and poor boys. But the different classes among the scholars, as well as among the courtiers and the attendants, ate at different times. First of all, naturally, came Charles. After him the nobles were served at the second table. Then came the third table, with the military officers and the wealthier pupils of the school. After they had finished their meal the fourth table was served to the servants of the wealthier pupils and to the poorer pupils. Finally came the fifth serving, the remnants of the food to the remnants of the people—that is, the servants of the servants. The poor people in Charlemagne's court were thus trained in moral as well as in physical discipline. They were compelled to cultivate not only an obedient heart but an obedient stomach.

But, it must be admitted, Charlemagne himself was abstemious in his appetites. He had trained himself to keep a healthy and active body always on the alert for the unexpected march. The romantic writers, in their eagerness to raise him to superhuman heights, have exaggerated his capacity for food. At a

## CHARLEMAGNE

single meal, they tell us, he devoured a goose, two chickens and a quarter of mutton. But this gargantuan appetite is quite in keeping with his gargantuan stature and physical power as depicted in the books of these romantic writers. He was, they tell us, eight feet tall—in reality he was a trifle over six feet—and he was able with a single stroke of his sword (we are asked to believe) to cut asunder a horseman together with his horse.

In one respect, however, the romancers did not greatly exaggerate. Investigation has demonstrated that his appetite for unchastity was rather abnormal. He had five wives, four concubines and seventeen children. A few years after his death, a monk composed the *Vision of Weltin*, in which Charlemagne is depicted in purgatory with a vulture gnawing perpetually at his guilty body. It was not necessary, however, for Charlemagne to enter purgatory after his death in order to be punished for his uxoriousness. Even in his lifetime he was no hero to his women. Taking advantage of his passion, they all tormented him more or less. One of his wives, Fastrada, was—to use the expression of the Saxon poet—“like the throbbing of an angry carbuncle.”

But, in spite of his domestic troubles—or, shall we say, as a compensation for his domestic troubles?—he went on conquering his enemies, extending his kingdom and receiving the hosannahs of his prostrate subjects. At last, in the winter of 814, he suffered an attack of pleurisy. With the superstitious stubbornness of his day he refused medical aid but tried to cure himself with fasting. He grew gradually weaker, and on the 28th of January, 814, at the age of seventy-two, he died and was buried on the same day.

He left to three of his sons a vast empire which he had bought with the death of his fellow creatures. But this empire did not outlive his three sons. It fell apart for a very good reason. A union of nations cannot be cemented with the blood of slaughtered men. Conquest produces hatred, hatred flames into

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revenge, and revenge results in destruction. And so the conquered become the rebels, and the rebels become the new conquerors, and the unholy circle is completed at the point from which it started. In the meantime, millions of lives have been lost and nothing has been gained.

**SALADIN**

*Important Dates in Life of Saladin*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1137—Born at Tekrit.                     | 1187—Conquered Crusaders at Jerusalem.                              |
| 1164—Began conquest of Egypt.            | 1189—Besieged at Acre.  |
| 1174—Completed conquest of Egypt.        | 1191, June 8—Richard the Lion-hearted assumed command of Crusaders. |
| 1174—Began conquest of Syria.            | 1191, July 12—Acre capitulated.                                     |
| 1175—Proclaimed Sultan of Syria.         | 1192—Peace treaty made between Saladin and Richard.                 |
| 1177–80—Waged war against Crusaders.     | 1193—Died.  |
| 1181–87—Consolidated his power in Syria. |   |
| 1187—Resumed war against Crusaders.      |   |

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# Saladin

1137—1193

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**O**NE day Saladin's officers brought before him a woman from the Christian camp. Through an interpreter Saladin asked her to state her complaint.

"A Moslem soldier," she wept, "stole into my tent last night and carried off my little daughter. When I appealed to our general, he advised me to seek justice from Saladin. 'He is a chivalrous knight,' said our general, 'and his heart is filled with compassion even for his Christian foes.'"

"Your general was right," said Saladin. "I shall send my messenger at once to search for your daughter."

The search was successful, and the messenger returned with the stolen child perched upon his shoulder.

The sight of the reunion between mother and child brought tears to everybody's eyes, and not least of all to Saladin's. He loaded the two with presents and sent them back to the Christian camp.

And then he sought out the Moslem kidnaper and paid him a ransom. "The mother," he said, "is entitled to her child, and the soldier is entitled to his booty."



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

A man of great tenderness and fairness, this leader of the Moslems against the crusading Christians.

And a man of subtle cruelty. One of his slaves, guilty of a misdemeanor, threw himself at Saladin's feet with a quotation from the Holy Book:

"Paradise is for those who control their anger."

"I am not angry," replied Saladin.

"And for those who pardon misdeeds," added the suppliant.

"I pardon yours."

Emboldened, the slave went on: "And especially for those who return good for evil."

"I give you your freedom," declared Saladin.

"May Allah be merciful to you!" exclaimed the slave.

"And to you, too," rejoined Saladin. Then, turning to an attendant, he said: "Cut off this man's head!"

"But why?"

"The Holy Book also says that he who sins against his King deserves death."

## II

SALADIN JOSEPH BEN JOB—to give him his full name—was born into a world where brother fought against brother, where sultans were turned into beggars and beggars into sultans, and where Christians and Moslems slaughtered one another "for the greater glory of God." His father and his uncle were warriors of Kurdistan, adventurous mountaineers who waded to nobility through rivers of blood. At one time they found themselves arrayed as the commanders of two opposite camps. Instead of joining battle, they decided to join forces. The Sultan, Nureddin, celebrated the union with two appropriate presents. He made Saladin's father Governor and his uncle Vice Governor of Damascus.

It was in this city that Saladin spent his childhood. His education consisted of the three H's prescribed for the Moslem nobility

## SALADIN

—the training of the head, the heart and the hand. He was taught to write poetry, to revere the Koran and to wield the sword. Legend has it that he also went in for an extra-curricular course on love. We are told that he had an “affaire” with Queen Eleanor, the wife of Louis VII, who accompanied her husband on the Second Crusade. The queen—so the story goes—was so enamored of Saladin’s exploits that she offered to elope with him. Saladin prepared a splendid barge and sent it to Antioch for his lady’s escape. The lady, leaving her husband in his sleep, stole to the seashore and was about to enter the barge when the king appeared and dragged her back to marital captivity. A jealous maid in love with Saladin had betrayed her at the critical moment.

Unfortunately there is the fly of anachronism in the ointment of this romantic idyl. Saladin at this time was a schoolboy of twelve, and his only exploit to date was a facility in memorizing the Koran.

However, the legend was probably true to the spirit if not to the letter of Saladin’s impetuosity as a youngster. “At twenty-five,” writes his biographer Behadin with the reticence of a pious Mohammedan, “Saladin put aside the drinking of wine and the pleasures that go with it.” From now on, his impetuosity was to be channeled from the drinking of wine to the shedding of blood.

It was with reluctance that Saladin gave up the diversions of Damascus. His uncle had invited him to accompany him on an expedition into Egypt. “By Allah,” exclaimed Saladin, “I wouldn’t go if the sovereignty of that country were offered me!”

“The sovereignty of that country *will be* offered you—if you make good. We mountaineers of Kurdistan, we purchase our land with the sword.”

Saladin decided to go.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

### III

HE PROVED himself a brilliant fighter from the start. Coached by his uncle, he turned tail shortly after his first battle had begun. This flight was but a ruse to entice the enemy into an ambush. When the Egyptians had become disorganized in their headlong pursuit, the apparently "routed" forces of Saladin fell upon their pursuers from every side and put them to the sword.

This "mousetrap" tactic was to become a regular procedure in Saladin's subsequent campaigns. For the present, however, there was a lull in the fighting. The enemy was conquered. Saladin's uncle was appointed Grand Vizier at Cairo, and immediately he surrendered to the fleshpots of Egypt. Turning over to Saladin the cares of the government, he proceeded to eat and drink himself to death in less than three months.

Saladin, as the second in command to his uncle, was now selected not only as the *nominal* but as the *factual* Governor of Egypt. An enterprise which he had entered with reluctance was now concluded in triumph. "It is strange," observes the Moslem historian, El-Athir, "that to bring certain persons to Paradise it is necessary to drag them thither in chains."

But his sojourn in the Paradise of early achievement was a bed of roses with a prickly mattress. It kept him continually and uncomfortably on the jump. There had been many older and more experienced aspirants to his office; and these disappointed candidates tried their best now to bring about his ruin. Saladin, however, was equal to the emergency. One by one he eliminated his rivals—some with bribes, some with honeyed words, and a few of the more recalcitrant with the sword.

And then he set about with his more ambitious plan—to stop the bickerings among the Moslems and to unite them into a concerted war against the Christians. He believed that Providence had destined him to this end. "When Allah permitted me to ob-

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tain possession of Egypt with so little trouble, He implanted in my heart the thought to drive all the infidels out of His Holy Land.”

Saladin’s thought was always a precursor to action. He raised an army, opened an offensive against the Christians, plundered several of their camps, and returned to Egypt to discover that the Caliph had just died. He took the Caliph’s four wives and eleven sons into “protective custody,” immured them in a fortress where they could do no harm to his ambition, proclaimed himself “the new Caliph of Egypt by Allah’s command,” and set out once more against the Christians.

And then Nureddin, the Sultan of the Moslems, died. Saladin was a step nearer to his goal. “Nureddin,” he said, “was the grandson of a slave. I am the grandson of a soldier. Already I am the sword of the Moslems. What is to prevent me from becoming their scepter, too?”

And so for a time he ceased his activities against the Christians and concentrated upon the conquest of the throne. He gave as a reasonable motive for his ambition the necessity for a united Moslem power under a single head.

In his effort to subjugate his rivals in the larger world, he adopted the weapons which he had found so useful in the subjugation of his rivals in Egypt. The bribe, the word, and the sword.

There was one rival, however, whom Saladin found it rather difficult to handle. This was a boy of twelve—Es-Saleh, the son of Nureddin and heir to the Moslem throne. When Saladin’s army approached the gates of Aleppo, the boy mounted his horse and addressed the people in the public square: “You remember my father’s kindness toward you. Repay him now with kindness toward me. Drive away from the city this horrible man who has no regard for his God or his King.”

The child had been well coached by his tutors. His speech had the desired effect. The people of Aleppo rose in a mass to defend Es-Saleh against Saladin.

But it was an ill-organized and ill-trained mass. It took but

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

a single bloody battle for Saladin to assert his undisputed mastery over the Moslem world. He now turned his attention once more to the Christians—or, as the Moslems called them, the Franks.

### IV

“**HIS STATURE**”—we are quoting Sir Walter Scott’s description of Saladin—“was above the middle size. His slender limbs . . . seemed divested of all that was fleshy or cumbersome . . . His features were small, well formed and delicate, though deeply embrowned by the Eastern sun, and terminated by a flowing and curled black beard . . . trimmed with peculiar care. The nose was straight and regular, the eyes keen, deep-set, black and glowing, and his teeth equalled in beauty the ivory of his deserts. The person and proportions of Saladin, in short, might have been compared to his sheeny and crescent-formed saber, with its narrow and light, but bright and keen Damascus blade.”

This portrait, though touched up by the vivid imagination of the poet, represents the composite idea of the medieval writers about the appearance of the soldier who rode like a whirlwind through the fanaticism of the Crusades. The Moslems, like the Christians, were carried away by their frenzy to preserve their holy places in Jerusalem against the intrusion of the infidel. For the Christian was as much an infidel to the Moslem as the Moslem was to the Christian. Jerusalem was the seat of the Sacred Stone of Mohammed just as it was the seat of the Holy Crucifix of Jesus. Saladin, like Richard, was fighting what he believed to be the battle of the Lord against the powers of Hell. Saladin’s daring was equalled only by his devotion. Eight times a day, however busy he was in battle, he took time out for prayer. “It is in answer to my prayers that Allah has given strength to my arm.”

And the strength of his arm drove the Christians gradually back—out of Hattin, out of Tiberias, out of Acre, Beirut, Caesarea, Nazareth, Sefferija, Sidon and Tibnin, and on to Jerusa-



*Saladin*



*Kublai Khan*

## SALADIN

lem! No matter how often repulsed, he always came back. "Like a pertinacious fly," wrote an Arabian admirer, "he kept his distance whenever compelled to do so, but was ready to renew the attack the moment the enemy relaxed."

And, in a fatal moment of the enemy's relaxation, he captured the Holy City. By a strange coincidence—the Moslems called it divine intervention—Saladin entered Jerusalem "on the anniversary of Mohammed's ascension into Heaven." The Angels of Heaven, wrote a Moslem poet, "waited rejoicing. There was more power in this one night than in a thousand ordinary months, for the Angels had come down to earth to assure us of the victory. The everlasting joys of Paradise were on that night decreed to Saladin Joseph ben Job."

Intoxicated with his conquest, Saladin now seriously considered the invasion of "the Christian lands across the sea." One day, as he was looking out upon the Mediterranean, he turned to his secretary. "Shall I tell you what is in my mind?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well," said Saladin, "when by God's help I have driven the last Christian from our shore, I will sail to all the islands of the sea in pursuit of them, until there shall remain not a single unbeliever on the face of earth."

Saladin was an avenging fury to the rank and file of the Christians, and a chivalrous knight to their leaders. When Richard the Lion-hearted, in a fit of anger, murdered 2500 Moslem hostages, Saladin retaliated with the murder of 2500 Christian prisoners. But when Richard was sick, Saladin sent him peaches preserved in snow. On another occasion, when the sister of Reginald, one of the Christian commanders, was being married at the besieged city of Kerak, Saladin gave orders that there must be no firing upon the castle where the ceremony was performed. In return for this courtesy, it is interesting to note, Reginald sent meat and wine from the wedding feast to Saladin. The historians who relate these anecdotes fail to tell us, however, how the relatives of the



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murdered hostages reacted to the exchange of courtesies between the murderers.

### V

SALADIN, now fifty years old, had reached the summit of his glory. And then his fortune suddenly declined. Ill health, renewed bickerings among the Moslems—success as well as failure can sow the seeds of dissension—and the mobilization of a new Christian army bent upon the recapture of Jerusalem—all these factors conspired against his ambition to carry the fight to the Christians upon their own soil. It was all he could do now to defend Palestine against the onslaught of Richard the Lion-hearted. Time and again he fought in the saddle in defiance of his doctor's advice to remain in bed. Always, in spite of his suffering, he was in the forefront of the fight. Once, during a long-drawn-out battle at Acre, he was too engrossed to eat for two days. "The only food I want is the death-cry of the enemy; the only drink, the shedding of his blood."

His body grew weaker from day to day. But his spirits never flagged. In spite of the onrushing tide of the Crusaders, he still hoped that "the sword of Allah will do execution upon them, severing their strength from their limbs and finding their necks for a sheath."

But neither Allah nor his Moslem troops seemed inclined now to further his hopes. His officers found it difficult to obey the commands of a sick man.

Yet even in the midst of his misfortune, he remained always the *bon chevalier*. One day a sally of his Moslem soldiers from the besieged city of Acre resulted in the capture of a number of the besiegers—men of superior rank including the treasurer of the French king. Saladin ordered them to be taken to his tent, "clad them in robes of honor, entertained them at a sumptuous banquet, and supplied them with good horses to carry them to Damascus."

## SALADIN

The siege of Acre, in the meantime, had taken a desperate turn. Saladin, "restless as a mother weeping for a lost child, his heart full of grief, went from battalion to battalion, crying, 'On for Islam!' But all in vain." The grip of the English king was like that of a bulldog upon the victim's throat.

At last the city gave up, and Saladin moved on with his depleted forces to the defense of Jerusalem. In the strengthening of the city walls, Saladin not only attended to the planning but helped with the manual work. Still suffering from his illness, "his body covered with festering sores," he carried heavy stones upon his shoulders as an example to his men. Out of his tent at day-break, he labored until noon, rested a while from the burning sun and then returned to his work. Long after midnight, his biographers report, it was possible to distinguish the royal tent because it was the only one that had a light inside. "The man never eats, never sleeps, never despairs. For Allah, he declares, will perform a miracle to save the city."

And the miracle actually came to pass. It was on a Friday, the Moslem Day of Rest, that Richard advanced within sight of Jerusalem and to the amazement of its defenders marched right on to Egypt. "All that day," the Moslem chroniclers relate, "Saladin prayed in silence to Allah. And Allah listened to his prayers and turned the hearts of the infidels away from his Holy Shrine."

King Richard, however, gave a less supernatural reason for his decision to leave Jerusalem alone. The rainy season was coming on, with its usual threat to rust the armor, ruin the food and dampen the spirits of his soldiers. Moreover, many of his knights were sick of the Crusade. They too, like the Moslems, had fought bravely and undergone great hardship. Better to rest them for a spell. "The following dry season will be early enough for the final blow."

The truth of the matter was that both sides had fought themselves to exhaustion. They were ready for a truce. After some

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dickering, the truce was arranged, and Richard set sail for England (October 9, 1192). "But I promise you," he wrote to Saladin, "that I will shortly return to bring about your defeat."

To this "friendly defiance" Saladin replied: "If it be the will of Allah, I can think of no man worthier of bringing about my defeat than the British King."

### VI

IN LESS than five months after the signing of the truce Saladin was dead. On his deathbed he is said to have spoken the following words to his son, Ez-Zaher: "I came into the world with nothing; and after many years of warfare I go out of the world with nothing. Avoid bloodshed, for blood never sleeps. Follow in the way of peace. For this alone is the way of God."

# KUBLAI KHAN

*Important Dates in Life of Kublai Khan*

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1216—Born. (Grandson of Genghis Khan.)                 | 1275—Received Marco Polo.         |
| 1227—Accompanied his grandfather on his last campaign. | 1279—Became ruler of all China.   |
| 1260—Assumed the succession.                           | 1281—Lost campaign against Japan. |
| 1267—Completed new capital, later known as Peking.     | 1294—Died.                        |

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# Kublai Khan

1216—1294

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**L**ONG after Adam, a group of men found another Eden—the Tartar conquerors of the Orient, toward the end of the twelfth century A.D. They galloped into China like the wind, with long, sharp arrows at their belts and with kettledrums that beat out the tune of war and victory. They had come from the sandy wastes of northern Asia, bringing with them their wooden idols and their fermented mare's milk. Genghis Khan was their ruler. And after him ruled Ogadai Khan, and Kayuk Khan, and Mangku Khan. They held the petty local princes bound in the fetters of terror; they took the vast fertile "Flowery Kingdom" for their own domain, and they left to history a thousand romantic stories of their government, their military exploits and their nocturnal feasts.

But it was as brief as it was brilliant, this dynasty of an alien race of conquerors. With the splendor of a pinwheel they spun around the axis of their triumph and then disappeared into the night. It was a bizarre episode in the storybook history of China, and, more than that, a glittering illustration of how a family of warriors, drunk on the blood of the battlefield, tried

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to raise themselves to the pinnacle of the gods only to discover that they were mortal creatures, subject like their fellow mortals to a momentary dream of glory and a dreamless eternity of sleep. The splendor of the Mongolian Khans lasted scarcely a hundred years.

But how it dazzled the world during that brief century!

### II

BY FAR the most brilliant of the Mongolian rulers of China was the grandson of Genghis, Kublai Khan. When Genghis lay upon his deathbed, he pointed to the lad and told those who had gathered around him to mark well whatever Kublai said or did, for the wisdom of the Khans was here deposited. "He will rule you one day," said Genghis, "and he will usher in an age even more splendid than my own."

Kublai ascended the throne in 1260, when his brother, Mangku Khan, had lost his life in battle. He was forty-four at the time—of medium height, with night-black eyes that flashed out from a thick, heavy, sensual face, an ample girth that added solidity to his commands, the beard of a sage and lips that had tasted the sweetness of many a rosy cheek. One of the first bits of business that Kublai attended to, upon his ascension to the throne, was to provide himself with a harem. This he did on a grand scale according to the custom of his predecessors. He sent his agents to a tribe of Tartars, called the *Ungrats*, who were especially noted for their beautiful women. Four hundred maidens were selected on a competitive basis, every feature of every contestant being appraised at a definite number of points—the hair at sixteen, the eyebrows at seventeen, the figure at twenty and so on. Those who survived the preliminary test were chosen for the court. Here a further elimination was held, and the winners in this secondary contest were entrusted into the keeping of elderly matrons, whose duty it was to sleep with

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the girls in order to ascertain whether they had sweet breaths, or whether they snored or tossed or talked in their sleep. Those who passed this final test were selected to wait upon their royal husband. Six maidens were assigned to serve and entertain him for three days and three nights, whereupon they were relieved by another relay of six maidens and so on until the end of his illustrious reign. It was said that this great Khan became the father of forty-seven sons, and that when he went into battle his army was largely officered by his own family.

It was not, however, as a warrior that Kublai Khan excelled. He was far more famous as the able administrator of a remarkable country.

For China, in the days of Kublai Khan, was the wonder of the world—a precious jewel on the garment of the East. A constant stream of merchandise flowed between the two leading cities, Peking and Hangchow. The rivers and the canals were spanned with a thousand bridges, alive with human traffic. The products of industry were carried in gaily colored junks, on the backs of horses and oxen and on bamboo poles slung across the shoulders of coolies. Rich bazaars dotted the streets, and magnificent warehouses lined the water front. Schools of speckled fish were hauled into nets and sold to the eager crowds on the squares. The gold and silver exchange markets hummed with a babel of tongues from all the four corners of Asia.

But, for all this busy traffic, the standard of living for the masses of the people was as low as it had ever been. For this was not an age of mass industrialization. The necessities of life were not produced in large enough quantities to pass at modest prices into the hands of the many. The businessmen dealt largely in commodities of luxury and in oddities from foreign lands. They imported cargoes of perfume and silk, sable and ermine, fox skin and vair, musk from Tibet, sandalwood from Timor and spices and gum from Cochin China. It was an age of hand labor and of artisan virtuosity, and the fruits were for the very few.



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Yet the wealthy traders with their visions beyond the horizon and their resplendent argosies, and the magnificent aristocrats who rode through the streets on fine, blooded horses or in gaily colored palanquins, were not the leaders, or even the most honored members, of Chinese society. This distinction was reserved for the men of contemplation, the scholars and the poets and the philosophers who sat absorbed upon the lofty throne of their thought, and who left to men of action and of worldly shrewdness the prosaic business of everyday life. For the foundation of Chinese society was neither economic nor political but philosophical and moral. The ministers of the government were men well versed in the intellectual acumen and the ethical grandeur of Confucius. The moral law of justice was valued far above the physical law of commerce; and, as a matter of fact, the merchants were, together with the soldiers, at the bottom of the social scale. It was only natural, in the cruel dispensation of Destiny, that a peaceful government of philosophers should be conquered by an aggressive army of barbarians.

When the Tartars invaded China they reduced the native inhabitants to the status of slaves. For the religion of Confucius they substituted a ritual of idol worship. They carried the images of their gods about with them as they swept, scythelike, over the nations and harvested the fields that had been planted by other men. They were a strange, savage, picturesque race, these Tartars, striking terror wherever they went, yet, like gorgeous creatures of the wilderness, fascinating those whom they terrified. When hungry on the march they plunged their spearheads into the loins of their horses and drank the spouting blood. They cooked the bodies of their enemies killed in battle and ate the meat with relish. They combined the practice of polygamy with a sense of high regard for the chastity of their women. Marriage, to them, was one of the most sacred institutions. If a betrothed girl died just before her wedding her

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parents brought her to the bridegroom in her coffin, and the wedding proceeded as though she were still alive.

Such were the Mongolian invaders who rode into China like a sleet storm from the north. But, little by little, their barbarity melted away under the influence of China's softer climate and humaner laws. They adopted the thoughts as well as the customs of the Chinese. All the public offices in the country had been filled by Tartars. Yet the ruling class intermarried with the ruled, as is so often the case in history. Having conquered the Chinese physically, they were in turn conquered by them spiritually. Genghis had been the ruler of a caste. Kublai was the monarch of a nation.

This grandson of a barbarian soldier was as broad minded as he was broad in body. He was insatiably curious. This curiosity of his had led him to collect strange species of birds and animals from every part of Asia. Out of sheer curiosity to explore beauty to its depths he had built his fabulous gardens and fountains and palaces of cane rushes tied with cords of silk. Out of his desire to plumb the depths of all life's sensations and to translate them into a complete and variegated experience he had initiated a daily routine of splendor and pageantry that had gained for him the envy of the world. And so, when the two traveling merchants, Nicolo Polo and Maffeo Polo, came to his palace half the way across the globe from Venice there was nothing in the way of earthly goods that they could sell him. For he had them all.

But the Polos were thoroughgoing traders. Unable to sell him their goods, they immediately set about to sell him their religion. The Khan listened to the legend of Jesus and weighed its merits on the scales of his fancy with his characteristic shrewdness, just as if he were appraising the latest merchandise from one of his ships. He was as happy as a child over the story of the Bible. The magic of the legend thrilled his pagan imagination. He was a great connoisseur of religions. The Jews, the Buddhists

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and the Moslems among his subjects had displayed the principles of their various creeds before his court, and the representatives of each of these creeds had begged him to choose one and to renounce the rest. But to make such a choice was against the temperament of Kublai. His eyes were dazzled by the colored mosaic of the many jewels spread before him, but to play with a single one to the exclusion of the rest would be sheer boredom and unworthy of a noble Khan. Kublai must have as many facets for his faith as he had wives for his children. Monogamy in religion was as unthinkable to him as monogamy in marriage. As a mark of signal respect to the Polos, however, he introduced Christ into his household company along with the other divinities—Jehovah, Buddha and Allah. "I worship and pay respect to all four of them," he announced, "and I pray that he among them who is greatest in heaven may come to my aid." He regarded all the divinities as his equal guests. He was willing to meet them courteously, for he was by nature friendly and polite. But he was determined to show them no more reverence than he would show to any mortal visitor he happened to entertain in his house. He was particularly impressed with the ethical basis of Christianity, and he agreed that it was a reasonable as well as a gentle enough religion. When the Polos pressed him to introduce it among his subjects, however, he demurred on the ground that to do so would embarrass him politically. For it couldn't compete in entertainment value with the fakirs and the dervishes who performed feats of black magic as a gentle persuasion to their respective faiths. "I know that your religion is sound," he confided to the Polos, "but where are your magic and your miracles to fling at the pagan priests when they start ridiculing it before my subjects?"

He liked the sublime picture of Jesus as drawn for him by the Polos, but he was a little amazed that "such an exalted man should have allowed himself to perish on the cross." That sort of sacrifice, he insisted, a great Khan would never make. He

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could admire the tremendous influence that Jesus exerted upon the masses of western Europe, but it was beyond his power to understand that Jesus wielded this influence through humility and not through force.

What interested him even more than the story of Jesus was the story of the Pope. *That* he could understand—the picture of a noble prince, wealthy, proud and powerful like himself. Hence he asked the Polos to return to Europe and to bring back from the Pope a commission of five hundred good Christians who might present the case of Christianity after the manner of barristers.

Following Kublai Khan's instructions, the two merchants returned to Europe and brought back with them, not the five hundred wise men, but a couple of Dominicans and Maffeo's son, Marco Polo. This ingratiating young merchant of Venice promptly insinuated himself into the good will of the great Khan—not, however, by his Christianity, but by his witty tongue and his stomach for wine. Marco remained a guest of Kublai Khan for twenty-five years. During this time he rose high in the councils of the state, became one of Kublai's provincial governors and stuck fast to his Christian principles but succeeded in imposing nary a one on the Khan.

For the mighty Khan felt self-sufficient in his vainglorious pomp. His palace in Peking was encompassed by a wall sixteen miles in circumference. The banquet room, large enough to seat six thousand guests, sparkled with its tapestries of vermilion and green and with its ornaments of chrysoprase and silver and gold. There were gardens and fountains, and rivers and brooks, and bow-shaped lakes for the emperor's fishing and ancient forests for his hunting. Paved highways, two cubits above the level of the ground, spanned the estate; the rain washed down from the sides and left the highways always dry. In the midst of the estate there was a dome-like, artificial hill, all carpeted with green:

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*A stately pleasure dome had he,  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man,  
Down to a sunless sea.*

His was perhaps the most dazzling reign in all history. When he sat down to his meals the waiters stuffed their mouths with silk napkins so that their breath might not contaminate his food. When he put the wine cup to his lips a flock of musicians piped out a joyous tune, and the whole company of attendants, usually eight to ten thousand, bent their knees in humble obeisance. This elaborate ceremony was repeated every day of the emperor's rule with the promptitude of a church service. He paraded before his subjects on New Year's Day in the midst of a thousand white elephants. He rewarded the military exploits of his captains with heavy tablets of gold. He dined his ministers of state in silver chairs. And once a year he handed out money to the poor—not through any sense of obligation, but rather as a divine compensation. For he regarded himself as a God—and what would become of a God if he lost his retinue of worshipers? And so he distributed his alms and dispensed his justice, with a shrewd and sentimental benevolence.

In the dispensation of his justice he was the last court of appeal, in heaven as well as on earth. His subjects not only respected and feared him in this world, but they were taught to anticipate a renewal of their acquaintanceship, on the established basis of master and slave, in the world beyond. For Kublai Khan's rule, they believed, was eternal. His worldly magnificence, they were told, was bound to outlast the world itself.

### III

YET all this magnificence cost him not a penny of precious metal. He paid for everything he possessed, not with gold, but

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with a currency made from the bark of the mulberry tree, stamped with his royal seal. These bills, which had no treasury backing, and which were issued without limit, were circulated with as much solemnity and authority as if they were pure gold or silver. There was no necessity for worrying about the effects of deflation on the people, for the rank and file of the people were below any economic consideration whatsoever. The important thing was that Kublai Khan, for whom alone, apparently, the arbiters of Destiny had created the world, could buy all its pleasures and its treasures at no cost to himself. The merchants were compelled to give him their gold and their silver and their precious cloths and their jewels and their meats and their spices and their wines—all in return for his worthless strips of mulberry bark. In this way, Marco Polo tells us, Kublai Khan “acquired more riches than any other monarch in the world.”

We are today familiar with such totalitarian economics and indeed with the entire pattern of absolute rule. It is questionable whether it has varied, in its main essentials, within the last eight hundred years. There is this one difference, however. Whereas the present-day dictators whip their people into a solid phalanx by stirring them up into a crusading zeal, the Great Khan crusaded for nothing at all. He did not need slogans for a new ideology to mask his self-interest. It was enough that he had sprung from a family of conquerors who for some time had imposed their rule by force. The people, befuddled by traditionalism and driven by a hypnotic fascination to believe implicitly in a leader who implicitly believed in himself, were ready to follow him, to toil for him and to die for him like dumb, driven cattle.

## IV

TOWARD the end of his life Kublai cast longing eyes on the island of Chipangu, now called Japan. He desired to annex this

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island of short yellow men to his dominions. Accordingly, he sent his two trusted generals, accompanied by a thousand warriors, on a visit to the Japanese emperor. These military ambassadors set out in two ships. As they were sailing over the unknown sea a squall overtook them and tossed them against the rocks. A few managed to survive by swimming to a sandy beach. The rest went down in their unholy cause of unprovoked annexation.

Word of the expedition and of its bitter end had come to the ear of the emperor of Japan. He decided to put the survivors out of their misery. An army under his banner embarked on several ships and set sail for the island of refuge—a magnificent fleet intent upon a mission of “merciful murder.” But the Chinese survivors were not willing to be murdered. When they saw the approaching ships they retreated behind a barrier of rocks and huddled together with bated breath. The ships unloaded their military cargo. The troops marched into the interior of the island in search of their victims. But they had committed an oversight. They had forgotten to leave a guard on their ships. Seeing this, the wily Chinese fugitives filed down to the beach by a hidden path, boarded the ships and set sail for the island of Japan, where now—so the story goes—no army had been left to guard the king. They took possession of the capital, hoisted their standard on high and settled down to enjoy the riches and the honors of the Chipangu emperor. Like the followers of Ulysses in the land of the Lotus Eaters, these Chinese adventurers had forgotten all about their homeland, their overlord, their families and the fickleness of fate. The transition from shipwrecked sailors to sudden rulers had gone to their heads. In their haste to depart from their island, they had left one ship behind. The enraged Chipangus now boarded this ship and hurried home. The followers of Kublai were rudely awakened from their dream by the blare of military trumpets. They were awakened just long enough to be put to eternal

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sleep. Only one man was spared. And he was sent back to China to bring the news of the disaster to Kublai Khan.

It was a great personal disappointment to Kublai—not that a thousand families had lost their men, but that a mere mortal creature had dared to defy the Almighty Khan. Hitherto nothing had been denied old Kublai's whims. But here at last was his match. Where even the gods had yielded, the Chipangu emperor had remained firm.

Kublai, however, made no further attempt upon Japan. For there was a good measure of shrewdness in that pompous old head of his.

Kublai died at the age of eighty-two, sated with his wives and his pleasures and his pomp. The attentions and the honors so lavishly showered upon him by his subjects were unable to keep him, as he had hoped, in eternal spring. That is the task left for a more modest shower, and it is meant only for the grass and the flowers that Kublai trampled upon and lorded over as a god.

And now, as he lay in state with as much dignity and purpose as a waxen doll, a blush would have driven the peace of death from his cheeks had he been able to foresee the restless future—how within a pitifully brief time his upstart family would be thrust out of China as rudely and as suddenly as it had thrust itself in, and how the liberated kingdom would once more be ruled by its own people, in its own quiet way, with the conquest and glory of the Khans a brief, insignificant and half-forgotten chapter in the history of the oldest and in many ways the wisest nation in the world.

## V

KUBLAI'S hundred wives were buried alive with him, in accordance with the Mongolian custom of the day. And when the pallbearers, carrying the royal body to its final resting place, encountered any of his subjects on the way they drew their



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swords and slew them, shouting, "Go serve your master in heaven. He needs you there!"

It can hardly be possible, however, that Kublai has need of any servants in heaven. Certainly the servants in heaven have no need of Kublai Khan.

# HENRY VIII

*Important Dates in Life of Henry VIII*

- 1491—Born at Greenwich.
- 1509—Succeeded to the throne. Married Catherine of Aragon.
- 1521—Executed the Duke of Buckingham on charge of high treason. Defended papacy against Luther and received title of "Defender of the Faith."
- 1527—Applied to Rome for divorce.
- 1529—Pope Clement VII declined to grant divorce.
- 1532—Henry broke with Rome.
- 1533—Divorced Catherine and married Anne Boleyn.
- 1534—Became head of Church of England.
- 1535—Beheaded Sir Thomas More.
- 1536—Beheaded Anne Boleyn on charge of adultery. Married Jane Seymour, who died a year later.
- 1540—Married and divorced Anne of Cleves. Executed Thomas Cromwell, who promoted the king's marriage to Anne of Cleves. Married Catherine Howard.
- 1542—Executed Catherine Howard on charges of infidelity. Made Ireland a kingdom.
- 1543—Married Catherine Parr.
- 1547—Died.

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# Henry VIII

1491–1547

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“**W**ELL now, Wolsey, how shall we get rid of her?” King Henry was tired of his Spanish wife. His father, the seventh Henry, had given him Catherine on the rebound after the Prince of Wales, her first husband, had died suddenly of the fever. At that time Henry had thought that Catherine of Aragon was the loveliest lady in the world. And right proud was he to be married to her so soon after her bereavement. The death of his brother had in fact marked a turning point in his own career. Up to that time he was merely another member of the Tudor family, the insignificant second son whose presence or absence, life or death, didn't concern anybody very much. For he never would be king of England. That honor was reserved for Prince Arthur, the tall, pale, sickly hope of the Tudor line. The sun shone on Arthur, while the shadows engulfed the childhood of Henry. As a lad he was meek and quiet, and his royal father trained him for the church. Here was a perfect priest in the making. And then, by a sudden stroke of fate, Prince Arthur died, and Henry inherited his wife and his throne. He accepted the double gift with a prayer of thankfulness to a Providence

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whose business it was, apparently, to crush one man in order to exalt another. Henry considered himself the most fortunate of mortals.

### II

AND NOW, as Henry faced Cardinal Wolsey twenty years later, grown shrewd and cynical and spoiled after this long period of uninterrupted glory, he was determined to get rid of his queen. Time was when her black eyes and her red lips had aroused his keenest appetites. But now he felt that they were good only for the reading of the Scriptures and the mumbling of prayers. Her growing piety repelled him. She was always at Mass when he desired her to join him at dice. She stared at him with a strange mysticism when he wanted her to be thinking only of love and lust. Her slim body had grown old. Twenty years with the same wife, he concluded, is a trying story, even if the heroine is Spanish and lovely.

"I'll divorce her, Wolsey," he told his first minister of state, and Wolsey could hardly disagree with him. For, born of a poor and obscure butcher, he owed his entire career to Henry. A divorce, however, was a shocking way out of the restraints of matrimony. The Pope would try to prevent it with all the power that the Holy Church could muster. It was a delicate business; it required tactful handling. What would Henry's Catholic subjects of England say to this putting away of the quiet queen after two decades of faithfulness and love? He was a hard-living, hard-playing king. He had a beard of gold, an eye of fire, a splendid physique. He was a graceful rider, keen with the arrow and the other weapons of the hunt, a devil of a fellow. He could drink down a tankard of ale with the best of them. He was every inch a king. A king to hand down his greatness to the next generation. But he had no son. "Damn that woman. She has not given me an heir!"

"But, Your Majesty, what would Spain say?"

## HENRY VIII

Well, Spain could go hang. "Go see the Pope, Wolsey. Tell him that since Catherine was married to my brother Arthur before she became betrothed to me, our own marriage is incestuous, null and void, a stain, a curse. Get it annulled."

Henry's lawyers had framed the convenient excuse. Henry was at the dangerous age. He had set his eye upon a buxom maid but lately arrived from the court of France—Mistress Anne Boleyn.

Wolsey set out on his historic visit to Rome. The Pope received him politely enough. But he had also received a letter from Catherine, who somehow had got wind of her husband's plot. It was a tear-stained letter that she sent to Pope Clement. She was the daughter of Spain's very Catholic king, Ferdinand, prince of the most churchworthy land in the world. Yet Clement was embarrassed. He could hardly afford to ruffle the feelings of the powerful Henry of England, his chief political supporter in Europe.

And so Clement maintained a discreet neutrality in this royal battle. But Henry, with all the verve of his strong-blooded lineage, collected his lawyers and ordered them to indict the queen in pompous, high-sounding Latin phraseology—to indict her of incest and to ship her off to a convent. Catherine was summoned to the court room. "A fine time to be asking whether I am the king's lawful queen or no, when I have been wed to him for twenty years." Whereupon the periwigged old lawyers shook their heads sadly. She had no business to question the decisions of her husband. The king sat in splendor, surrounded by four ecclesiastics and a dozen counsellors, as the court proceedings continued. The queen demanded the right to appeal directly to the Pope. "Motion denied," returned Cardinal Wolsey.

"I protest the legality of this court," she cried out in desperation. For the judges were her sworn enemies.

"Protest denied," returned Wolsey, bending his nose deli-

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cately down to catch the whiff of a flower which he held in his hand.

The queen stood up from the bench and retired, for she could find no justice in this court. Yet the king's henchmen were afraid to bring in the verdict that Henry desired. Even Wolsey felt that he was skating on thin ice, the thinnest ice of a long career in the course of which he had cut many fancy figures and taken nary a tumble. At this moment Cardinal Wolsey had good reason to hesitate. For the Pope had at last broken his silence. He would not tolerate such treatment to the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Wolsey could not afford to look lightly upon Pope Clement's decision. But, on the other hand, there was the king's interest to consider. King Henry had taken Wolsey out of the gutter and raised him to the highest cabinet post in the land. He had built him castles and presented him with a retinue of five hundred men. He had ordered for him robes of gold and satin, had given him the bishoprics of Hereford and Winchester and had made him Archbishop of York. And Henry was a hard master to be crossed. It was a difficult position for Wolsey, who therefore decided to make no decision at all. Instead he procrastinated and whispered honeyed words of flattery into His Majesty's ears, talking to him about everything except the one subject that was uppermost in Henry's mind.

In the meantime the papal court was taking a vacation. It wouldn't meet until the fall, and then it would review Henry's case once more. Henry was rapidly losing his temper. This was no time for legal dillydallying, when he had set his heart upon making a queen out of that pretty court wench, Anne Boleyn. "Wake those old ecclesiastic graybeards up—punch them in the face for all their red tape and their Latin phrases!" 'Ods blood, but his constitution couldn't wait for those slow, cold deliberations at the Vatican. His was a rapid pulse. He was accustomed to take his pleasures swiftly and with no pretense. At the hunt he wore out as many as five horses in a day. He had the strength

## HENRY VIII

of a wrestler—didn't he once throw the king of France to the ground in a friendly joust? He was a full-blooded giant of a man who couldn't stand upon ceremony when the animal impulse seized him. "If those diddling fools at Rome don't get down to business," he threatened, "I'll take matters into my own hands!"

He raved and roared like a bull, and in the heat of his passion he composed poetry to Anne Boleyn. For he had a genuine feeling for poetry as well as a savage lust for life, this amazing play king of Merrie England. And he sang songs to her—songs that were suited for the roystering tavern rather than the royal court.

*No beauty doth she miss,  
When all her robes are on;  
But beauty's self she is,  
When all her robes are gone.*

And thus he sang and he stormed and he waited for the blessings of the Church upon his unblessed love. But finally the black day arrived when the word from Rome branded the divorce proceedings as outrageous. Catherine breathed a sigh of relief. But not for long. "If Rome has qualms about me," roared Henry, "then I'll have no qualms about Rome." The eyes of Anne Boleyn were bright and penetrating; they were full of laughter. She had told Henry that she would not consent to an illicit love. "Your mistress, sire? Never!"

"Well, then," replied Henry, "I'll make you my queen." Luxuriating in his own self-confidence and warm with the blood of the Tudors, he called together his faithful council and told them to pass the decree of divorce.

"But, sire, the head of the Church is against such proceedings," they ventured mildly.

"What head?" bellowed Henry. "I am the head of the Church of England from this day forward."

"But, sire!"

"I have decided to assume this position so that we need no



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longer send to Rome for any orders. Come now, don't look so amazed. As the High Priest of England, I declare my marriage to Catherine of Aragon no marriage at all, according to the laws of our New Church. I hereby grant the divorce. She is no longer queen of England."

### III

AFTER THE DIVORCE a new queen, Mistress Anne, wide of mouth with dark, stormy eyes, a strawberry mole on her neck which only added to her charm, a lissom form, the grace of a goddess, a slight malocclusion of her upper teeth which made the lips even more tantalizing, a small protuberance from the little finger, a sort of sixth finger—all in all, a desirable little package of feminine charm. She had been lady-in-waiting at the court of France and mistress of the French king, mistress of the most socially prominent of the English lords, mistress of the kitchen boys—yet she played for a queenship and won it. She had her little hour and made the most of it. She was first in fun and laughter, a little mischievous thing with joy written on her heart, good enough morsel for this pleasure-loving, middle-aged king. The people, to be sure, did not take to her. They did not like being ruled by an upstart maid. "Down with this Nan Bullen," they muttered. But Mistress Anne had the eye of His Majesty. She kept him entranced with her buoyant charm. She led the dances at the court; she imported dizzy steps from France that left the gallants agog. She masqueraded on the green, dressed as an archer, and shot arrows with the accuracy of Cupid; gossiped with her maids; traveled in style with up-tilted nose; and finally flounced and bounced her way into the palace of the king.

When the tidings of this new outrage arrived at the Vatican the Pope excommunicated King Henry and his court. The pious Catholics throughout the countries of Europe looked aghast at Henry. Adulterous Tudor, they called him. And his

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new queen they named Jezebel. "If she ever gives him a son, so much the worse for the future of England. Heaven help a nation ruled by a king conceived in sin!" And even the courtiers of England began to whisper in their beards. "Poor Henry, Lord bless his flesh! Hasn't he enough concubines without making a chambermaid his queen?"

As for the Pope, he now turned wisely away from the unholy mess in England—wisely yet mournfully, for he had lost one of his proudest sons in Henry. Too bad that a man's appetite could so lead him astray. What energy Henry might have enlisted in the service of the Roman Church! Ah well, better leave him alone to go his own foolish way!

But Henry, willful rebel that he was, wouldn't leave the *Church* alone. The blood ran high to his face when he was crossed. He was quick to take offense, and his punishment was terrible. He hated as lustily as he loved. He took revenge on the poor English monks for the Pope's attempted interference with his marriage. He burned their monasteries; turned them loose to the wolves; seized the Church gold; sent the faithful to the gallows. What a thorough job he did! No wonder his intimates trembled at the very sound of his voice, even when he spoke to flatter, not to condemn. The most intimate friend of them all, Cardinal Wolsey, had not been on the scene to tremble and adore him for quite a spell, now. He had been too slow about the arrangement for the divorce. He had dared to question the propriety of his master's new match with Anne Boleyn. He questioned the propriety of nothing now, poor fellow. It was but a short distance from the council chamber of the royal master to the prison room at London Tower. Many had taken the road before Wolsey, and most of them the few steps beyond to the executioner's block. But Wolsey was spared this final journey. He was released from the Tower. His lands, however, were taken from him; his ecclesiastical robes were torn off his back; his titles and his honors were withdrawn. He was allowed

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to go free when he was already a man without hope, a broken-down derelict suffering from a fatal disease brought on by his former luxury and his present grief. In the splendor of King Henry's court he had developed a rich taste for the fleshpots of Egypt. In spite of his ecclesiastical position he had eaten meat and drunk wine even in the Lenten season. And now, crushed in health and in spirit, he entered a monastery and begged for the simple gift of a bed to die in. The following day he was removed from the bed to his grave.

### IV

"WHILE Anne dances, a shadow hovers over her, mark my word," the oldest maid of honor told her colleagues. "You know what happened to Queen Catherine? It will be the same with Anne."

"Life has been good to our king," remarked a second maid. And then, lowering her voice, she added, "A little too good, I am afraid."

They stood in the corridor and gossiped about the private household affairs of royalty—affairs which after all were not so very private. All the world knew about them. There was a new glitter in the king's eye and a new passion in his heart. Mistress Jane Seymour, the lady-in-waiting to the queen. An appetizing, buxom young thing with a roguish smile.

"Pray for the queen. Pray she bears him a son. That is what he desires, above all else. . . ."

"Five children, three by Catherine, two by Anne, and no son yet."

"A son will save her and nothing else."

And nothing else! See how prettily she waltzes through the grand ballroom at the ambassador's masquerade—the very breath of heaven. See how she tilts her head in laughter at something a young admirer has whispered. He holds her hand

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for a moment. Luckily the king is half drowsy with ale. See how her white neck glitters in the light of the chandeliers. She is so young and so full of joy. Now she whirls away from the grasp of a young dandy, mouth parted in anticipation, a mischievous glint in her eye. What a tantalizing little fairy tale bit of a princess! Still graceful as a young birch in the morning breeze. And yet, one more glance at her figure, and you discern a subtle change. The budding of a new life. Another child. . . . Perhaps a son? . . .

As the afternoons grew longer in the spring she sat in the garden with greyhounds at her feet and looked into the soft shadows. She had become accustomed to sitting more and more by herself, musing sadly and silently and listening to the humming of the warm air. Listening also, perhaps, to the breath of the new life that was stirring within her. And one day, as she went into her garden, she came upon the king in the arms of a maid. There was a violent scene. She rushed to her room. Desperately she tried to reach her bed but fell senseless to the floor.

They summoned the doctor. Her eye was glassy. The new life within her had died. The birth had miscarried. And it was a son.

An heir had been lost to England. The Tudor lion, nostrils distended, eyes ablaze, vented his fury at the death of his male cub. He turned upon his wife. Damn, stupid creature! She could have taken the seed he had planted within her and nurtured it into the image of her master. But she had allowed it to perish in a fit of feminine temper. She had crushed and ruined his dearest hope, the hope of all England. A crime for which there would be no forgiveness, in heaven or on earth. Certainly no mercy in the Tudor household, no quarter for this welshing, sniveling, whining cat. It was *his* son she had murdered, *his* destiny and glory she had spilled away in her wanton rage. He shut himself up in his chamber; took his meals alone; stared

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with sullen, terrible wrath at the wall. The queen sat silent, pale, terrified—a broken vessel of a woman, expecting the worst.

And the worst was not long in coming. The king issued the order for her arrest. Arrest for what? For bearing a babe and undergoing the agony of losing it? Not at all. The official charge, drawn up by the king's ever-resourceful lawyers, was adultery. Solemnly she was led to her trial. Two men were presented to the court by the King's Council. They were alleged to have shared with Henry the charms of the queen. The trial was perfunctory. Just for good measure it was charged further that Anne Boleyn was guilty of incest with her brother. Not a word mentioned about the ill-fated miscarriage. Not a hint that she had served her usefulness; that the king had grown tired of her dances and her glances; that this was the real reason for her arrest and her trial. There was the buxom little maid, Jane Seymour. Time for a change of wives. The verdict was guilty. The marriage was declared null and void. Anne went to the Tower, with bowed head—a strange weariness in her steps at twenty-nine. As she sat in her cell she recalled an incident that had occurred some years ago when she was playing cards with her maid. She had turned up a king. "Someday you will draw a real king," her maid had prophesied. She had played the cards well, ambitious wench, until she had won for herself a real king. A real king, indeed! The fulfillment of her dream. The end of her life. As she sat in the Tower, awaiting her death, she composed a little poem:

*Farewell, my pleasures past,  
Welcome my present pain,  
I feel my torments so increase  
That life cannot remain.*

On the following day, the executioner cut off her head with one clean stroke. A former lover, who was in the crowd, rushed

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forward and tenderly picked up the bleeding head in his hands. Henry Tudor sat in his chamber and waited for the signal from the Tower which would inform him that it was all over. "Well," he said as soon as he heard the signal, "let's go hunting."

### V

"BRING Thomas à Becket to trial for heresy," commanded the king. His legal advisers looked at him in amazement. "The man's been dead for many years, sire. Shall we drag up his bones?"

Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury three hundred and fifty years before the time of Henry VIII, had dared to side with the Pope against Henry II in a controversy regarding the national taxes and the papal tithes. He had suffered a martyr's death when two hotheaded knights in the king's employ seized him as he was praying at the altar. Two years later the Church had canonized him. Here, indeed, was a Catholic saint who would serve as an excellent target for the vengeance of Henry VIII. The king's word was law. The king's will must be done. And so, with grave ceremony, the lawyers read the indictment against Thomas à Becket and summoned him to trial. The fact that he was nothing more than bones and ashes did not disturb the judges. He had been an enemy of the English king three and a half centuries ago, and he was still answerable for his crime. The mere passage of time, argued Henry VIII, does not blot out a controversy. Are we not suffering today for the sins of Adam, God knows how many years ago? Accordingly, Henry held a trial of the bones and found them guilty of heresy.

"A gracious king, a most wise and just king," whispered one of his subjects cynically. "Like an elephant, he never forgets."

"He's getting to look more like an elephant every day," remarked another of his subjects. "Once he was athletic and

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slender. But look at him now—scarcely forty, and so fleshy he can hardly move from his chair.”

“It’s the king’s privilege to grow fat while his people starve.”

“And it’s the people’s duty to starve while the king grows fat.”

These, and many similar remarks.

Once he had been an accomplished musician, but now he played only upon his hogsheads of wine, played a lusty tune with jolly comrades; dissipated his days and his nights in reckless debauchery; became more like a toad on the throne than a king. “There was Jane Seymour, the one he married after he put away Anne Boleyn. Do you know what happened to her? Didn’t live out her life any more than the others. Died in childbirth after giving him a son.”

“He killed her,” remarked people close to the court. “He killed her just as surely as he killed Anne Boleyn, just as surely as he drove Catherine of Aragon to a convent and to her death. He forced her to make merry with him and the entire court at the birth of his son. And she not yet forty-eight hours past her delivery. Forced her to banquet with the court and to march in the great baptismal procession when her body was racked with pain. May God have mercy on her soul.”

“Well, her death did her at least one favor. It liberated her from Henry.”

## VI

AND now, who will be next? Why, Anne of Cleves, the daughter of the German prince. Anne of the docile temper and the plain face. Docile and plain as a cow, smiled the cynics. Henry had been deceived about her. He had sent his court artist to paint her portrait and to bring it back for him to examine. The painter had done the job too well. He had brought back with him the picture of a beautiful woman. Henry, a connoisseur in art, looked at the picture and said, “I’ll take her.” The marriage



*Henry VIII*





*Queen Elizabeth*

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was arranged. English envoys were sent to fetch the girl and to carry her in triumph to her royal bridegroom. When the king's ministers met her their hearts quaked within them. How could they break the news of her plainness to Henry who was dreaming of the lovely picture he had seen of her? Heads would roll for this mistake, no doubt of that. Anne entered England in her carriage, and Englishmen everywhere, when they saw her, bowed their heads in silence. She was wild with anxiety, this plump, dull mass of a woman with good intentions. She couldn't understand the manner in which she was being received. She couldn't speak a word of English; she couldn't dance the fashionable steps at the English court. She had been brought up at the spinning wheel, well trained in the modest virtues of a Flemish *Hausfrau*, with no spark of brilliance but with a good deal of enduring solidity.

As for Henry, he could scarcely wait to see her, so thrilled was he with the official version of her charms. They met at last, the king and his German bride. He was cordial enough, but the minute he had set his eyes upon her the lady's doom was sealed.

"I'll not bed with that mare of Flanders," he growled.

Everybody sympathized with the king. His great embarrassment had become a national issue. The king's habits were weighed carefully and collectively against the possibility of a war with the German princes. "She is just too physically repulsive to our Henry," declared the generals. "Let's see how many soldiers we can muster on the battlefield."

Finally a settlement was reached. The good Flemish woman was shown the errors of her ways—the Lord knows what they were—and she was persuaded to give up any hope of remaining permanently in the blessed state of matrimony. She was forced to grant Henry a divorce; and at the same time, in order to quiet the fears of her relatives across the channel, she was told to pen them a letter stating that she was so enamored of England that she had decided to make it her home for the rest of her

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life. She was not allowed to add that she had no choice in the matter. For Henry, fearful of the story she might bring back to Germany, had made her a virtual prisoner. She retired to her spinning wheel, doffed the robe of royalty, assumed the official title of the King's Sister and was never heard of again.

There was just one other matter that the king attended to before he finally dismissed from his mind this whole disagreeable episode of his marriage to Anne of Cleves. He ordered the execution of the artist who had painted too good a picture of her.

### VII

HENRY TUDOR looked down miserably upon his subjects, thinking what a shame it was that even the most powerful of reigns must come to an end. In his own case he felt old age descending upon him with alarming suddenness. It was premature old age—a horrible blunder of the fates, this slackening of the muscular powers, this loss of vital energy, this embarrassing obesity, this insomnia, this general stupid, sluggish feeling. It shouldn't take possession of him yet. He was only fifty. Far too early for that right leg to be so misshapen with the gout. What if the cushion it reposed on was made of the finest red velvet? His meanest subjects could still walk and run and ride horseback, and play and plan and mate. He coughed asthmatically. Twenty years ago his breath was as free from ailment as any man's. "And I, too, will mate. You'll see, I'll mate again!"

He loved his next wife best of all—the one after the wretched episode with Anne of Cleves—Catherine Howard, that wench whose eyes were fire. Catherine was only eighteen. She had stirred the ashes of his old heart into new life. She had aroused within him emotions that not even Anne Boleyn had been able to evoke. And he had made her his queen, not with the cynical memories of a king who had taken four wives and had outlived three of them, but with the fanciful hope of a poet approaching

## HENRY VIII

his first love. He had refused to believe what all the world whispered as a fact—that Henry Tudor was a man accursed, and that no woman would ever find happiness with him. He had wedded Catherine Howard, adored her, rested his aging body in her arms, sought to drink the wine of youth from her lips. These were happy hours, sitting with her in the garden and finding her lovelier than any flower, kissing her sleeping eyelids into consciousness every morning. This was a final radiance across the twilight of his life before the long, dark shadows chilled him and the evening came.

### VIII

HE LAY face upward on his bed at fifty-five. The Archbishop stood solemnly near him. "Do you die in the hope of your salvation through the mercy of Jesus Christ?"

"I do." He turned his face, so that his cheek rested on his pillow.

"Bring me my wife," he requested weakly. His eyes were closed. Yet, when she entered the room, he was instantly aware of her presence. He gave her his hand.

"Catherine," he murmured. And he was awakened unpleasantly by the sound of her answering voice. This was another Catherine, a later Catherine. This wasn't his young Catherine at all. She, too, had gone the way of all the rest. Tongues had whispered against her; had planted the seeds of suspicion in his ear; had brought dark charges of unfaithfulness; had made him insane with jealousy. There had been a trial, just like the others before. . . . She had laid her adored head on the executioner's block. . . . All that was long ago, five years ago. Then he had married again. And this was his quiet, kind woman, this Catherine Parr, his latest wife. . . .

"You've been a good wife to me," he breathed, and the pale faint light of a smile crossed his face.

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"And you, sire," she said politely, "have been a good king."

A discreet one, she. The others had talked too much for their own good. She spoke sparingly and only the right words; nursed his gout; sat at his bedside for hours; read him books on theology to save his immortal soul. She had been a widow before this royal marriage. She knew how to handle her man. She wasn't going to sacrifice her life on any account. She knew how to soothe this old, restless king. He raised his head with an effort and leaned his cheek against her arm. An attendant took a few steps forward as if to help. "Go away!" Henry roared with something like his old strength. "Get out of this room! Leave me alone with my wife!" She shuddered. She feared the ordeal, being left alone with a disintegrating, fat carcass, hearing the death rattle in this monster's throat.

Ah, well, it would be over in a few minutes. And then, she would be a free woman again, outliving the tyrant—the only one of the six. Poor Anne Boleyn had talked too much. That was it. And Jane Seymour. And Catherine Howard. . . .

"Yes sire?" she whispered in answer to a murmur from the pillow. What a helpless, putrid body lying by her side. Once it was the mightiest in Europe. Now she could silence it completely with a single slap. What was that he was babbling into her ear? She wondered if he'd meet them all again, in that other world, and try to embrace and to lord it over them as of old. Well, what was he talking about? Trying to justify his reign. Mumbling that he had brought glory and prosperity to his people. Had he really? Brought happiness to his women? Justice to his councils? She wished he'd stop talking and die peacefully. Poor, evil, suffering soul, he certainly had not lived peacefully. . . . And so a woman would close his eyelids at last. God have mercy on her soul. . . .

There was an awful stillness. She rose with a shudder. Her hand had been holding the hand of a corpse. . . .

Who'll weep a tear for Henry—just one solitary tear? Not a

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soul in England, from the high to the low, prince to peasant, duchess to kitchen maid. Why, yes, there is one lady weeping, nay, two, three, and then a fourth slowly takes shape, and a fifth. Their eyes are red with grief, and their arms are outstretched to welcome their lord on his long journey home. The first is a Spanish princess, and she smiles through her tears. And the second is a wench they call Mistress Anne. . . .



# QUEEN ELIZABETH



*Important Dates in Life of Queen Elizabeth*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1533—Born at Greenwich palace.   | 1584—Execution of Earl of Arundel for corresponding with Mary. |
| 1554—Sent to the Tower by Queen Mary, but Parliament refused to condemn her. | 1586—Sent expedition of Sir Francis Drake to West Indies.      |
| 1558—Ascended to the throne at death of Queen Mary.                          | 1587—Execution of Mary of Scotland.                            |
| 1564—Peace of Troyes with France.  | 1588—War with Spain.   |
| 1568—Imprisoned Mary of Scotland.  | 1589—Defeat of Spanish Armada.                                 |
|  | 1600—Chartered East India Company.                             |
|  | 1603—Died.   |

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# Queen Elizabeth

1533–1603

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**E**LIZABETH was the daughter of Anne Boleyn, that unfortunate, laughter-loving queen who had been sent to the block at the command of King Henry VIII. Throughout her life the shadow of her mother projected itself on the subconscious screen of Elizabeth's own personality.

Ever since she had learned to talk she had realized that she was motherless, and that somehow the death of her mother had been different from that of the mother of her half sister, Mary, or of her half brother, Edward. She always wondered why people looked at her with that strange sort of pity when mothers were discussed; why the servants whispered cautiously about certain happenings . . . a woman's unfaithfulness . . . the executioner's ax; and why her sister Mary was always putting on such airs in front of her. To be sure, Mary was twice Elizabeth's age, but was that the reason for the perpetual sneer on her face? Elizabeth got to feel, as soon as she was old enough to feel anything consciously, that her mother was in some way a woman to be ashamed of. Nobody seemed to take kindly to her memory. It was as if Elizabeth were involved in a

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bad dream that ought to be thrust back into the night where it belonged.

"Tell me," the little girl would ask the royal gardener, "what was my mother like?"

And the old gardener would answer, with a faint light in his eyes, "She was a very beautiful woman, Your Grace."

"And was she happy? And did she like to dance?" The voice of the little girl trembled with excitement.

"Yes. She was the very spirit of grace. And there were many men——"

"Many men?"

"Many men—and women too," he added cautiously, "who loved her."

Once her sister Mary flew into a violent temper at something that Elizabeth had done, and she snatched away the Latin book that Elizabeth was studying for her lesson. Mary was a pale and sickly thing, and her constant brooding had eaten away the flesh around her eyes.

"So you like to put on airs with your Latin books, and you like this fine, large royal house, don't you, you vain little scamp! You're certainly a child of your mother, you are." And then she added scornfully, "But God knows who your father is."

Elizabeth was furious. "How dare you talk like that! The king is my father. I am the Princess Elizabeth."

Mary laughed tauntingly, "As you will, you little brat."

Elizabeth left the room and rushed to the fat, blustering, terrifying master of the household, Henry Tudor. He was sitting in the midst of a circle of courtiers, hugely enjoying a story with his characteristic thick laughter.

"Father," she whispered, her trembling little eyelids wet with tears. The big man took her tenderly into his arms, stroking her hair.

"I am your little girl, am I not?" she pleaded, her lips resting against his shoulder.

## QUEEN ELIZABETH

“Of course, you little silly-billy Bess. Who told you otherwise?”

### II

In the course of time King Henry ate himself into the grave and left behind him a son who was sickly and frail, a mock image of a king, the last of the male Tudor line. And with his premature death the pale, ascetic Mary ascended the throne. Mary, a true daughter of the Catholic queen, Catherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife, was determined to avenge her mother's misfortune. Since the only man in Europe who had supported the claims of her unfortunate mother in the divorce suit had been the Pope, Mary undertook to bring England back to him.

The new queen, however, was a pathetic creature. Born of a suffering woman, she was morbidly superstitious. She was haunted by sickness and fear. She was passionately devoted to her husband, the Spanish king, who had deserted her. She had a constant premonition of an early death.

Accordingly, she inflicted her own misery upon everybody else and commenced a reign of persecution and violence that earned her the title of “Bloody Mary.” But as much as she hated the world, she hated her sister Elizabeth even more.

The young princess Elizabeth was now living at the palace of the queen dowager, Catherine Parr, the last wife of the royal tyrant. It was here that messengers had appeared before the sickly child, Edward, and pronounced him king. And Edward, when told that he must proceed to London without Elizabeth, had grasped the skirt of his sister in his pudgy hand and had insisted between tears that he would not leave her, even to be crowned. But she had kissed him on the cheek and told him to be a good boy and to allow himself to be made king.

It was here also that they had come for Mary when the young Edward had passed on. And some of the councillors had edge cautiously over to Elizabeth and offered her in honeyed voices

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large grants of land and money if she would sign away all her claims to the throne. But Elizabeth had parried them off with a wisdom far in advance of her years. Alone in the world, with not a friend to advise her, she must look out for herself or perish.

She had, as a matter of fact, already gone through a great deal of practical experience in self-defense. The latest husband of Catherine Parr, a certain Sir Thomas Seymour, had been watching the gradual development of Elizabeth's charms with a crafty eye. He was a fond foster father to her—and a little too fond, indeed, for Elizabeth's comfort. Time and again he embraced her with the strength of a bear and pressed his lips against hers with a brutal passion. His wife looked on with cynical amusement. And when Elizabeth began to comprehend the quality of Sir Thomas' affections she became terrified. She struck him in the face whenever he insisted on his advances. But this did not deter him. He admired the girl all the more for her spirit.

Elizabeth was treading upon perilous ground. At one point in the hectic reign of her sister, Mary, the Spanish ambassador had demanded, as one of the conditions of her marriage to Philip of Spain, the execution of Elizabeth on the ground that she was the child of a Protestant marriage. Subsequently the Spanish king himself had paid a visit to England and demanded that Elizabeth appear before the queen with a statement of her religious beliefs. She had been asked specifically about the meaning of the Holy Communion, and had replied with the courage of a sincere faith:

*Christ was the word that spake it;  
He took the bread and break it;  
And what His words did make it,  
That I believe and take it.*

There was a short silence after this declaration. Then an old guardsman stepped forward at a whispered order from the

## QUEEN ELIZABETH

bench. He seized her firmly by the arm, but she was not afraid. She had known the old soldier since she had first learned to toddle as a child.

Silently he led her to the famous medieval fortress on the Thames.

"We enter here, Your Grace," said the aged escort when they reached the gate.

"But I'm not a prisoner. Why should you put me in the Tower?" The girl stood still, refusing to move a step.

"You *are* a prisoner," he answered quietly.

"This is where they brought my mother." The girl shrank back instinctively as she added: "And mother never came out of here alive."

"Nonsense, Your Grace. This is merely a temporary confinement."

"The Tower is red with the blood of many a victim," said Elizabeth. "I know. First it was Lord Hastings. And then there was Lady Jane Grey, and Catherine Howard, and Anne Boleyn—my mother. And now they want *me*."

"Come, Your Grace," said the old man, not without tenderness. "It is not for us to question the wisdom of those who rule over us."

She followed him without more ado. But inwardly she kept repeating to herself over and over again, "Make me brave, O Lord, make me brave."

In due time she was released from prison. And she settled down to await a brighter destiny.

### III

IN THE MONTH of November 1558, when Elizabeth had reached the age of twenty-five, she received word that Queen Mary had died. Elizabeth was next in succession to the throne.

The coronation was simple. A single bishop officiated. The

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Gospel was read in English. The mass was sung in Latin. Nasty smell to that oil they anointed her with, she thought.

The ceremony took place on a cool, brisk day. She got a chill in the head. The first night of her queenhood she lay huddled up in her spacious state bed, her hands and legs kept warm with hot bricks. She was very happy. The council would be asking her to marry just as soon as the festivities were over. There must always be an heir to the throne. Well, there were men aplenty seeking her hand. The British Empire was a tidy little marriage dowry. And she was a charming young queen.

There would be talk of a Spanish marriage and of a possible match with the German emperor's son, the Archduke Charles. And there was Lorú Robert Dudley, a handsome devil of a British peer whom none of the nobility liked. But she knew him better than most. She had played with him, when they were children together, on the green of Hatfield House. Oftentimes they had ridden the same horse—and then they were very close. . . . She sighed and shut her eyes to realize her memories the more vividly. But a union with Sir Robert was now out of the question. For he had gone to work and married a fair-haired little vixen, a certain Amy Rosebart. Ah well. And now her first queenly act would be to make him chancellor of something or other, just to show him that there were no hard feelings.

She grasped her pillow tightly and smiled. Only a short time ago her life had been a matter of no importance to anyone at all, and tonight the question of her marriage engaged the attention of the entire world. Well, she would have a few things to say about this question herself. Marriage was a delicate business that very often led to tragedy. She thought of the unhappy marriage of her own mother, Anne Boleyn. And she remembered the miserable life of poor Mary Tudor as the wife of the Spanish king. On all sides of her she could see the terrifying examples of mismated men and women.

"Milords," she told Parliament when they made her the

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formal request, "it will be sufficient for me, when I die, if a marble stone declares that a queen, having reigned such and such a time, lived and died a virgin." There would be no wedding for this Virgin Queen.

Her councillors bowed their heads in obedience, but amongst themselves they wagged their tongues industriously. A few of them, more imaginative than the rest, recalled stories that had been current about their mistress—how, in fact, she was not a woman at all but a man who had been brought up as a woman under a curious set of circumstances. It was whispered that the little girl Elizabeth had died in early childhood, and that her nurses, fearing the wrath of the king when he should discover this, had substituted a little boy in her place.

"We've got a man on the throne," they said, nodding their periwigged heads. . . .

Some of the more romantically minded courtiers believed that a secret devotion to Lord Robert Dudley kept the queen from sharing her life with another. No accounting for a queen's taste. What a nobody he was! She was behaving like a hare-brained schoolgirl. He was a married man. Thank God for that. Imagine that reckless, low-born adventurer sitting on the throne of England because the queen was incapable of controlling an adolescent urge! Her own body, clad in its royal purple, is now one with the body politic of the state. And things are growing ominous. Master Dudley has been created Chancellor of the Horse. And his wife has died suddenly. A broken neck, sustained when she fell through a trap door in the attic of her husband's castle. Dudley is a free man again. It is whispered that it was his push. . . . But all that is idle gossip and of no account. So let us hush and keep our eyes open on the turn of events.



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### IV

**ELIZABETH** must make a religious declaration. Will she continue the persecutions of Queen Mary against the Protestants of the realm? Or will she resort to the policy of her father, Henry VIII, and hound the Catholics to their graves? Elizabeth's very claim to the throne had been based upon the Protestant marriage of her mother to the royal Henry. The Pope at Rome had not sanctioned the wedding. Certainly she must insist, along with her father, that she alone was head of the Church of England. And so she directed Parliament to pass the Act of Supremacy which embodied this prerogative.

Yet Elizabeth was no persecutor by temperament. Her people could think on matters of religion as they liked, provided they conformed outwardly to the Established Church. This, for the age, was the broadest form of tolerance. It was the sincere wish of a shrewd woman that there should be no needless opposition to the throne. Truly her father could have used some of her self-restraint.

The religious question was only a chapter in the political story of the times. But it was the leading chapter. In the Elizabethan era the governments of Europe were still based upon an ecclesiastical, rather than a political or economic, foundation. The Catholic Hapsburgs were bent upon maintaining their empire in its two branches: the Austrian and Bohemian branch on the one hand and the Spanish and Italian branch on the other. Both the Archduke Charles, heir to the Austrian throne, and Philip, king of Spain, were intent upon marrying the queen of England in order that they might swing the island into the Hapsburg sphere. Neither of them believed he would have any trouble in persuading Queen Elizabeth. For they were both confident of their military power, if not of their personal charms. Neither Charles nor Philip cared much as to which of the two might win the queen's hand, for neither of them had the

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slightest affection for her. As a matter of fact, Philip had stipulated that in the event of his marriage with Elizabeth he would expect to reside in Spain while Elizabeth stayed in England. It was generally recognized that the only time Philip would be at all enthusiastic about paying England a visit would be on the occasion of an attack with his army. As for Charles, he shared Philip's view. What both of them wanted above all was to set up a Catholic Hapsburg over the destiny of England.

In addition to the Hapsburgs, the Scotch Catholics, too, were determined to put one of their own men upon the English throne. The candidate of Scotland for Elizabeth's hand was the Earl of Arran. What matter if he was a scoundrel and a boor, and that he tottered on the verge of raging lunacy? They urged him upon Elizabeth as an ideal husband for her. And she, knowing the meaning of prudence and the wisdom of discreet silence—and she had not been imprisoned in London Tower for nothing—smiled and kept her counsel. Another likely candidate came from France. Here a small group of well-to-do Protestant nobles and merchants, known as the Huguenots, were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Catholic court. Elizabeth had at first openly aided the Huguenots in their struggle, but when the quarrel between the sects had been finally patched up, Elizabeth had made her peace with the Catholic rulers of France.

To cement this new amity between France and England the French king offered upon the matrimonial altar his none too attractive brother, the Duke of Alençon, a young man with a top-heavy head set upon his shoulders like a Hallowe'en pumpkin and with the waist and the legs of a spider. Elizabeth had no intention of submitting to a more intimate scrutiny of this human monstrosity. Yet she couldn't afford to lose the friendship of France. And so she babied the Duke of Alençon, threw him kisses and called him affectionately, "My little frog." Indeed, she gave him every hope to expect a union with her.

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But she kept on putting him off whenever he wished her to name the date.

In the meantime, the liberty-loving bourgeoisie of the Netherlands, who had chafed under the yoke of Spain (the Lowlands had become a part of the Hapsburg patrimony by virtue of an earlier feudal marriage), rose in revolt under the stalwart Duke of Orange. Philip of Spain immediately sent his troops into the Netherlands in order to restore order under his half brother, a dreamy-eyed, fanatical intriguer who had visions of invading England and seating himself upon the throne. England could not tolerate the presence of Spain in the Netherlands, and Elizabeth once more rallied to the cause of the French Protestants, who, by ties of religion with the Dutch, were committed to aid them in their revolution.

The spectacle of the Huguenots fighting against the Catholic king of Spain aroused all the French Catholics, and especially the queen mother, Catherine de Medici, to a pitch of fury. She ordered a wholesale massacre of the Huguenots throughout the country.

The Huguenots were completely crushed. Elizabeth's Protestant supporters in France were no more.

But the French king was not unwilling to help Elizabeth in her fight against the Spanish in the Netherlands provided the queen lived up to the marriage promise she had given his brother. Elizabeth realized the seriousness of the situation. She ordered her ministers to draw up the marriage proclamation. She presented the ardent suitor with a ring. In the presence of the entire court she kissed him on the lips. People turned away in disgust. It was not edifying to consider that such a fellow might sit on the throne. "We can't understand how the queen can wed a man like him," remarked the courtiers to one another. "Of course it is true that our Bess is no longer young." But what a monster for a queen to marry, even if she *was* long past the flush of her youth! Deep pockmarks scarred his face.

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His nose ended in a knob which gave people the impression that he had two noses. He spoke in a croaking voice. Yet, for all that, he was a brilliant conversationalist and a man of no mean intellect. Not enough intellect, however, to see through the shrewd plans of the Bachelor Queen. She intoxicated him with her kisses and her smiles, and then she sent him off to his death—as she hoped—on the battlefields of the Low Countries. Here he succumbed—not, however, to the bullets of the enemy, but to the ravages of consumption.

So much, then, for the Duke of Alençon. But Philip of Spain proved to be a far less docile suitor for Elizabeth's hand. He was neither enchanted by her words nor fooled by her pretended affections. His courtship was not so much a matter of sentiment as of statesmanship. Conditions in the Netherlands had become critical. Philip opened negotiations for a truce with England. It was not proper, he said, for a man and a woman who had been planning marriage for thirty years to quarrel over a strip of land in Holland. Peace was concluded between these two dear enemies. The British ministers, however, were somewhat suspicious of Philip's dovelike intentions. Their suspicions were not entirely unjustified. For Philip was not to be trusted. Indeed, while negotiating for peace, he had been evolving a gigantic scheme for the invasion of England—a dream he had entertained ever since his ascension to the throne. He now decided that it was useless to undergo a marriage with Elizabeth for what he could get with a fleet of warships. He hadn't the slightest idea as to the military soundness of his projected campaign. Beyond the lives of a few thousand Spaniards his mistaken calculations would in no way affect him. And so, immediately after signing the peace treaty, he issued an order for the launching of one hundred and thirty-two ships to sail up the English channel and to provide a passage for his army into England.

The expedition was absurd from the start. In spite of the great secrecy in the preparation of the Spanish Armada, and contrary

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to all the popular legends, England was well aware of the invasion, and the queen took proper measures to withstand it. The Armada, in trying to establish its line of communications with its Netherland base, relied upon a stormy channel that no enemy had ever succeeded in passing through. The Spanish ships were huge hulks of sea fortresses that were clumsy to maneuver, slow to sail and good only for sinking quickly when hit. The amount of tonnage carried by the Spanish ships was preposterous, whereas the British ships were well balanced with sailors in proportion to the tonnage. The actual battle between the two forces lasted eight days. As to what the British did during the first seven days of the fighting we are still in the dark. But we know that on the eighth day sixty men were killed. The damage done to the Spaniards was due largely to the wind which, rising to the proportions of a gale, had devastated their fleet. Though seventy thousand English soldiers were stationed on the land in the event that the Spaniards might dock, no such land engagement was necessary.

Such is a summary of "the greatest sea battle in history." Philip never dared to stick out his pompous old head again. The psychological effect of this British victory was tremendous. From now on all Europe looked to England, and not to Spain, as the dominant sea power. And sea power meant empire. With the Armada beaten, the Spanish Empire began its long period of disintegration and Britain entered upon her ascent to a new and more formidable power than was ever known to the Spanish kings.

Gone was another suitor. And Elizabeth remained a virgin. "Bess certainly has a way with her suitors," exclaimed her admirers. "Her sagacity has been the safeguard of our national independence. God bless our queen for her judicious control of her desires."

Yet a few of her courtiers were still afraid. "At any moment another suitor is likely to appear. In fact, there is already some talk of . . ."

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A Puritan, named Stubbs, gently reminded the queen that at her present age she was not fit to undergo the throes of childbirth. The queen, in her anger—so the story goes—ordered one of his hands to be cut off. Whereupon the gentle Puritan took off his hat with his good hand and shouted to the assembled multitude, “God save the Queen!”

### V

SHE was a cool one, this queen. One of her admirers had scratched upon the wall of the royal anteroom the following pretty sentiment:

*Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall.*

When Elisabeth saw this, she added another line to complete the couplet:

*If thou hast fear, then do not try at all.*

The ambitious suitor who had expressed this doubt was Sir Walter Raleigh. With his usual gallantry he took up the challenge and succeeded in climbing into Elizabeth’s favor. But then his fears were realized. For he went on climbing still higher, until he finally mounted into the London Tower and lost his head on the executioner’s block.

Shrewd Queen Bess. How she played with her courtiers! She struck them and she loved them in turn. But none of them would she marry. Sad Queen Bess. For all the splendor of her court, alone in the world. No father, no husband, no heir. Her highest function not biological but political. Not a woman but a judge. Her greatest glory and her greatest sadness were in her moments of judgment.

“Must I condemn the Queen of Scots?” she demanded of her ministers who stood by her chair with the warrant for the execution unsigned. Mary Stuart, the widow of Francis of Valois, king of France—ravishingly beautiful, ambitious too. The

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Scots, her native countrymen, adored her. Strong men, ready to fling themselves body and soul at her feet. She had been a mere slip of a girl when she journeyed to France to wed the young Valois. And when his father had died suddenly at a tournament, and Francis had become king, Mary had clasped him by the arm with eyes full of fright and whispered, "We are too young to rule." She was as frail as she was beautiful, this blushing "rose of Scotland." The croaking of a raven at her birth had presaged the bitter tragedy that was to be the theme of her future life. Fatherless, and envied because she was destined to wear a crown, the baby was hustled by her mother from one hiding place to another. And a crown was put on her tiny head before she had learned how to endure its weight.

When she fled from Scotland and married the young French king her life knew a few hours of sunshine. But the thunderclouds followed fast. Her royal husband died prematurely. Her scheming followers ordered her back to Scotland to claim her native throne. And when she returned to the rugged country of her childhood her youth was gone. Nourished on intrigues, exposed to the cynicism and the scorn of her mother-in-law, Catherine de Medici, and fully aware of her lot as a royal waif who could survive only through adventure, she became the champion adventurer of them all. She threw herself into the political struggle and raised the flag of her charms to lead an army of men to her cause. She lavished her beauty recklessly upon all those who were in high places; she turned the stoutest heads, and she plotted for an empire to include England as well as Scotland. She was robust in her cold-blooded dreams and frail in her matchless beauty. Her frailty was her snare for men, and her ambition drove them on. But this ambition of hers was her final undoing. She murdered her lover; she had her second husband blown up in a gunpowder plot, and finally she was driven from Scotland by the very chiefs who had once adored her. She sought refuge in England, where immediately

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she became the center of London society. She interested many of the British nobility in her and plotted in secret to overthrow Elizabeth with their aid. Elizabeth, like everyone else, was tender to her because of her extreme beauty. But at the same time she realized that by her lenient attitude she was cooking "her own funeral feast." Finally Elizabeth imprisoned her, but she had no intention to let her die. Mary's intrigues, however, became unbearable. Treacherous letters passed through the prison bars, secret oaths of allegiance. Elizabeth was constrained to sign the warrant for her execution. She sighed, and with a stroke of the pen condemned so much reckless beauty to death. But even then she did not deliver the warrant to the executioner—the final necessary legal step. Instead, she left it for others to attend to. Turning away from her desk, she paced restlessly up and down her room and ordered that the subject be never again discussed in her presence.

## VI

AND when the shadows of her life had gathered like a shawl around her aged figure she sat with her pen and stared into the gloom. "Must I sign the order for *his* execution, too?" she mumbled to her lords. He was a young, ambitious man—this Robert Devereux, Lord Essex—a scarlet sun to brighten the twilight of her advancing years. She had been very fond of him, and she had raised him to the highest offices in the state. She had made him Governor General of Ireland. And she had sent him an army of twenty-one thousand men. But he had experienced great difficulty in subduing the Irish rebellion. And he had experienced great difficulty in restraining the impulses of his own rebellious temper. He had written angry letters to the queen, rebuking her for showing favor to other men of the court while he was away. He had negotiated with the revolutionists on terms that had received no sanction from the



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queen. And finally he had deserted his post altogether and rushed home to England. She was mortified at his behavior. Once before she had slapped him in the face for his disloyalty. Now she was too amazed to speak. She banished him from the court, "not to ruin him, but to correct him," as she put it. He was hotheaded. He had really meant no disobedience, she told herself. It was through his overcagerness that he erred. He was tremendously jealous of her affections, poor young simpleton. Perhaps she would pardon him if he came to her in all humility. She couldn't bear the thought of missing his cheerful smile, his rough-and-ready manner at court.

He came to her and threw himself at her feet. She bade him rise. All was forgiven. An old woman has nothing much left but the power to forgive. Suddenly, in the midst of their interview, he lost his head again. He taunted the queen and called her an old woman. He accused her of being crooked in mind and in body. She ordered him to leave her presence. But she would take no further steps. She was torn between her dignity and her affection. If only she were thirty years younger and possessed the strength to fight back against this upstart who had wounded her so sharply! Men had lost their heads for much less. She waited in silence for his return, planning to forgive him once more if he should ask her for it.

He never came back. He had become insane with fury. He entered into a plot with the king of Scotland to invade England and to oust Elizabeth from her throne. He tried to persuade the Irish rebels to join him. He collected soldiers in secret and trained them for a military coup. The queen's council seized him and confined him to the Tower. They voted to execute him. The queen was his last hope.

He sent her a letter, pleading for mercy—a love letter written in the old-time spirit. And Elizabeth sat in her chamber with the warrant for his execution on her desk. What held her pen?

In the olden days, when he had been ready to set out upon

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a dangerous journey, she had given him a ring from her finger, so people said.

“Do not bewail your fate at leaving me, but keep this ring, Robert,” she had told him. “And if ever you are in peril and in need of my assistance, send me the ring and I will come to you.”

Why did she hesitate to sign? What was she waiting for? She sat and stared into space—her old, wrinkled face wreathed in gloom. She looked as though she were waiting for something, someone, perhaps a messenger. . . . Sheer fancy, as historians say? How can we or they hope to pry open an old woman’s heart? Sadly she sat with her pen in her hand. Sat friendless and alone. She signed the warrant and retired to her private rooms in company with her memories. . . .

Several years later, the old Countess of Nottingham lay dying in her castle. She sent for the queen, so the story goes, and told her that Lord Essex, just before his death, had placed something into her hands which he had solemnly requested her to give to the queen—a ring.

*The* ring! And Essex had been led to believe that she had received it and had refused to come. . . . And now Essex was dead. “God may forgive you for your treachery,” she said to the old countess with a trembling lip, “but *I* never will!”

Though her body was to linger on for a spell, she died right then and there in her soul. No sleep, no food for ten days. She just lay propped up in her bed where she had flung herself and stared at everybody.

At last she spoke. “I feel time knocking at the gate. I am done.”

## VII

A MIGHTY AGE for England was this. England triumphant upon land and sea. At home there were men writing sonnets and sonorous plays that were destined to immortalize the age of the good queen for all time to come. This virgin lady reigned over

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a country prolific in golden words and deeds. But she was lonely to the last. "I really have no friends, you know," she said to those around her at the end. "I've killed my favorites out of pride. The blood of the Boleyns was always hot, and I doubt me if it cooled any when it was mixed with the blood of the Tudors. What have I to comfort me in my old age?"

"Glory, madam."

"Sorrow," she answered. "I have been too selfish. I have never known the joys of motherhood. I have never known what every woman wants above all. Above majesty, adoration, power, scepters, thrones."

Then she murmured to herself, "'This royal throne of kings, this other Eden—demi-paradise. This precious stone set in the silver sea . . . ' The words are familiar. 'This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.' Who said these words, my lords?"

"A young poet about town, Your Majesty—one William Shakespeare."

"A writer of tragedy, I believe. Let him search no farther than his queen for his material. For she has known the depth of tragedy."

"You have won the love of England, madam. For you have labored all your life in our behalf."

"Then let the curtain fall. For I am tired. A good day's labor deserves a long rest."

**MONTEZUMA**

*Important Dates in Life of Montezuma*

- 1466—Born in Mexico.
- 1502—Ascended the throne upon death of Emperor Ahuitzoll, his uncle.
- 1518—Learned of the landing of white men on Mexican coast.
- 1519—Negotiated with Cortes, leader of white invaders, without success. Seized in his own house by soldiers of Cortes.
- 1520—Killed by his own people for submitting to the white invaders.

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# Montezuma

1466—1520

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**T**IME, 1519, a hundred and one years before the arrival of the Mayflower at Plymouth.

Place, Mexico City, the capital of the Aztec Kingdom.

Mexico, the Venice of the New World. Built upon an island in the middle of Lake Tezcuco, it lay like a jewel on the breast of the Fertile Valley, seven thousand feet above the sea. The canals that intersected its colorful streets were spanned with stone bridges and were alive with gondolas carrying their goods to the market place. Here the copper-colored Aztecs, dressed in their cotton tunics, carried on a thriving business in maize and beans and barley, game, turkey, fish, fruits, honey and corn bread, loaves of salt and bars of chocolate, mantles of scarlet feathers and breastplates of quilted cotton, copper vessels, swords of obsidian crystal and cups of amber, flowers and herbs and spices and incense, nose ornaments and earrings and lip jewels, and above all, gold—tiles of solid gold, bags of gold dust, golden shields and plates and bracelets and exquisitely chiseled jewel boxes of glittering gold.

For Tenochtitlan—the Aztec name for Mexico—was one of

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the richest countries in the world. Its floating gardens—huge rafts of growing flowers—transformed Lake Tezcuco into a bowl of living incense. Its pyramids and monuments and fortresses and fountains were the achievements of a race that had attained a high level of civilization. Most curious of all the buildings was the great temple in the center of the city. It was surrounded by a square stone wall ornamented with the figures of serpents. There were four bronze gates in the wall, each gate opening upon one of the four principal avenues of the city. Built in the shape of a pyramid, the temple was divided into five stories, with a spiral staircase on the outside, so that on the days of the sacrifices the populace could see the procession of the priests winding around and around the temple to the top. Here there was an enormous altar flanked by two idols. This altar blazed with a fire that was never allowed to go out. It must always be held in readiness for the human sacrifices.

For they were a savage race, these civilized Aztecs. Like our own savage civilized races of today they believed in killing human beings in order to attain the goal of their ambition. They not only, like the white races of today, killed one another in war, but they burned one another on the altars of their temples. Life among the Aztecs was extremely cheap. On one of their sacrificial occasions, we are told, they burned no less than twenty thousand human victims in their temple at Mexico City.

Next to the altar on the topmost story of the temple stood the great drum of the serpent skins. This drum was heard upon all solemn occasions. It gave forth a weird wailing sound that struck terror into the hearts of the populace.

The voice of the drum was the voice of the king. Whoever heard his commands must immediately obey. For he was a great and powerful chieftain, this king of the Aztecs. And his palace was the wonder of all the seven kingdoms of Tenochtitlan. It stood directly across the street from the temple—a rambling

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structure of polished granite so vast in extent that "if a man walked through it until he was exhausted, he could see only a small part of it." Walls hung with tapestries, floors inlaid with precious stones, courtyards adorned with colonnades of porphyry and jasper, tables of sweet-scented cedar, and baths and fountains and couches of carved gold—such was the palace of Montezuma, king of the Aztecs.

Never had any ruler of the Aztecs enjoyed so magnificent a reign. His personal attendants, six hundred noble lords and ladies, awaited his commands in an antechamber. Whoever walked into his presence was obliged to remove his shoes and to throw over his dress a tunic of coarse fiber, as a mark of extreme self-abasement. And then he must prostrate himself three times before the king, addressing him first as "Lord," then as "My Lord," and finally as "Great Lord."

Montezuma changed his royal robes four times a day and never wore the same robe twice. Although he had a large retinue of beautiful Mayan wives and concubines, he always dined alone. A screen of woven gold was drawn around him so that no curious eye might spy upon the king at his meals. So meticulous was he in his habits that he discarded his dishes, like his clothes, after a single use.

When his royal litter was carried through the streets everybody was obliged to stand still with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

In addition to his palace Montezuma had a large number of villas and hunting forests and pleasure grounds. One of his favorite fancies was a huge aviary in which his servants had assembled all varieties of sweet-singing birds, as well as all sorts of birds of prey. Every day, it was said, these birds of prey were fed with five hundred turkeys.

Like the absolute monarchs of Asia and of Europe—although he had never heard of their existence—Montezuma believed that all living creatures, man, bird and beast, had been created



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for his especial and personal delight. And yet there was a bright thread of gentleness woven into the barbaric texture of his character. His manners were charming, and his generosity was lavish. One of the leading precepts in the Mayan code of ethics was liberality, and Montezuma had been brought up to adhere strictly to the moral principles of his country. He was magnificent in his gifts to the rich and openhanded in his alms to the poor. And, as a result, he was one of the most popular rulers in the entire history of Tenochtitlan.

### II

BUT, in spite of all this, Montezuma was an unhappy prince. For, of late, strange and terrible omens had appeared in Mexico. One day, without an earthquake or any other apparent cause, the Lake of Tezcuco had suddenly become disturbed; its waters had risen over its banks, had flooded the city, and had destroyed many of its buildings. Another time, the tower of the great temple had mysteriously taken fire and all efforts to save it had failed. On three different occasions blazing balls of fire had appeared in the eastern heavens, and rumblings of thunder had come out of a clear sky.

What could be the meaning of these omens? Did they have anything to do with the prophecy of their Great Bearded God, Quetzalcoatl? Their bearded white god who many, many years ago had sailed away on the eastern sea and who had never been seen again? He had prophesied that he would return some day in the distant future. Was that day near at hand? And were these omens meant to be accepted as portents of his second coming?

So, at least, the astrologers believed. Quetzalcoatl was about to return. And he was going to bring a race of new men to Mexico. White men, like himself. Cruel men, with thunder in their arms. They would attack the kingdom of Tenochtitlan.



*Montezuma*



*Ivan the Terrible*

## MONTEZUMA

And so, with terror in his heart, Montezuma awaited the return of Quetzalcoatl. And he sacrificed many men and women to Mexitli, the god of war, praying to him that he would protect the Aztecs against the coming of the strange white men from the east. The men with the thunder in their arms.

### III

THERE WAS, of course, nothing miraculous about the divination of the astrologers as to the coming of the white men. Vague rumors had seeped into Mexico about the discovery of Columbus, the expedition of Balboa, and the skirmish between Diego, the son of Columbus, and the natives of Yucatan. A descent of bearded god-men, who came in huge, white-winged canoes and who brought with them strange animals called pigs and horses and chickens. Men who held in their hands iron sticks that spit out thunder and death.

And now (in 1519) the rumors became more numerous and less vague. Quetzalcoatl at last was here, in the land of the Aztecs. He had arrived with eleven ships and a multitude of men—in reality there were only five hundred and fifty, but the numbers grew as they were passed from mouth to mouth. White men with black beards, marching and fighting their way through the countries of the Aztecs. And some of them came riding upon strange, four-footed animals, sweeping ahead like the wind and mowing down everything in their path. There was a battle at Tabasco, another at Cempoalla and still another at Tlascala; and everywhere the white men, with their death-dealing thunder-sticks and their ferocious-looking horses, spread slaughter and terror among the natives. And no wonder, for at their head rode the White God, Quetzalcoatl. But he went under a different name now—Hernando Cortes.

From time to time reports about the progress of Hernando Cortes were brought to Montezuma, who sat trembling in his

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palace. "What does he want of us?" he asked one of the messengers.

"Two things," replied the messenger. "To destroy our gods and to take away our gold."

And indeed, with the perverted psychology of the day, Cortes had a double purpose in his conquest of Mexico. He was equally anxious to save the souls of the Aztecs and to rob their bodies. His missionary zeal was, for all we know, as keen as his desire for personal gain. And just how keen his desire was for personal gain we are able to tell from one of the conversations that he held with a vassal chief of the Aztecs.

"Why," asked the Aztec chieftain, "are you so hungry for Montezuma's wealth?"

"We Spaniards," said Cortes, "are troubled with a heart disease for which gold is the only cure."

Montezuma, when he heard about this gold hunger of Cortes, tried to buy him off—at a distance. He sent him a splendid present—two loads of finespun cotton garments, several mantles of embroidered feathers and a wicker basket filled with golden ornaments. "The king," said the messenger, "has requested that you accept this gift, and that you return to your native home."

Cortes took the gift, looked hungrily at the golden ornaments, and marched on toward Mexico.

Montezuma, still hoping against hope, sent Cortes a second, and more magnificent, gift. Cortes could hardly contain himself when the slaves spread the rich carpets over the ground and placed upon them the various precious articles, one by one. Thirty slave loads of rich cloth, collars and bracelets of silver, crests of brilliant feathers, animals of precious metal and of exquisite workmanship, a huge, circular plate of gold, "as large as a cartwheel," and a helmet filled to the brim with gold dust.

"Accept this present from my king," said the ambassador.

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“You may remain upon his shores until you are completely rested from your journey. But you must not visit his city. For the way is steep and hard, and it lies through the countries of his enemies. Do not risk the lives of your men, but rest here for a while and then return to your own shores.”

But Cortes, now that he had received so glittering a sample of Montezuma's wealth, wouldn't think of going back. On the contrary, he was fully determined to make all this wealth his own. “This generous gift,” he said to the ambassador, “makes me all the more eager to meet your king and to thank him in person.”

The ambassador returned to Mexico and reported the bitter news to Montezuma. His unbidden guest refused to go. The prophecy of Quetzalcoatl had been fulfilled.

## IV

LIKE an approaching tornado came the devastating band of Cortes. Montezuma looked on in horror and could do nothing to stop it. Day after day messengers arrived with fresh news about the white men. They had entered the city of Cholula, but a few miles from Mexico, and they had burned its gods and massacred its inhabitants.

When he heard these tidings, Montezuma shut himself up in the palace and prayed to his gods. “Save us, O Great Spirits, from the White Warrior!” But the gods were deaf to his prayers, and the White Warrior marched on.

At last, seeing that there was no stopping this advance of the white men, Montezuma changed his tactics. Instead of warning them to stay away, he began to urge them to come on. For in this way he hoped that he might avert their wrath and make them his friends.

And so Cortes and his men went on, across the Valley of Cholula and past the two mountains that guard the entrance

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into Mexico—Popocatepetl, the volcano that smokes, and Ixtacihuatl, his giant wife.

As Cortes approached the city, Montezuma sent a courier to meet the White Warrior and to escort him to his palace.

And now they are crossing the bridge that lies between the mainland and the city. A dense crowd of natives, some of them in their canoes and others thronging the shores of Lake Tezcuco, look on with awed amazement at the "riding gods." What fate are these gods bringing in their hands to the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan?

Ah, but soon they will know! For here comes Montezuma himself to welcome Cortes at the entrance to the city. The king, in his magnificent litter, is borne upon the shoulders of the chief nobles who advance with their eyes bent upon the ground. Before him march three lords bearing wands of gold in their hands, and behind him follows a large retinue of attendants. As he approaches the white strangers he alights from his litter and proceeds over an outspread carpet. A servant holds over his head a canopy of green feathers embroidered with gold, to shield the great monarch from the rays of the sun. But who will shield him from the ambitious plans of Cortes?

See, here they meet at last, the great king of the West and the great conqueror from the East. Cortes is about to embrace Montezuma, but several of the nobles step forward to prevent this desecration of the royal personage. And so Cortes, instead, merely throws over Montezuma's shoulders a necklace of colored beads. Montezuma, to return the compliment, motions to an attendant to present Cortes with a collar of periwinkle shells ornamented with golden pendants. An exchange of greetings through an interpreter, and then Montezuma guides his unwelcome guests to a palace near his own.

"Great White God, or Great White Chief, whoever you may be, you are now at home. Repose and refresh yourselves as Montezuma's friends."

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With these words Montezuma takes his leave of the Spaniards. And as he turns to go there is a smile on his face but a great heaviness in his heart.

### V

AT THE SETTING of the sun Cortes celebrated his arrival in Mexico City with a salvo of cannons. Montezuma, sitting in his palace, gave a start of terror. The voice of the New God.

On the following day Cortes visited the Aztec king in his palace. Here he tried, politely but firmly, to explain the necessity of overthrowing the Aztec religion in favor of Christianity.

“Great Chief,” replied Montezuma, “your gods are without a doubt very good to you. But so are our gods to us. Please, therefore, to leave us to our worship as we are pleased to leave you to yours.”

Cortes thought it best not to press the matter just then. Accordingly he asked Montezuma’s permission to visit the great temple.

“You may visit our temple,” said Montezuma, “but you must spare our gods.”

He offered to send a litter in which Cortes would be carried up to the top of the temple. “It is a long climb, O Great White Chief—more than a hundred steps. I fear it will make you weary.”

But Cortes refused the litter. “The White Chief,” he boasted, “is never weary.”

And so he climbed the one hundred and fourteen steps to the top. Below him lay the city, a panorama of white stone palaces that glittered like silver under the tropical sun. In the distance rose the pyramids of the temples in the other cities of Mexico. And above them all towered the two guardian mountains of the country—the Smoking Volcano and his Giant Wife.

The eyes of Cortes were aglow with the ambition to lay this



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entire country at the feet of the Spanish king. A new country for Spain, new wealth for himself and a new religion for the Aztecs. For, let us repeat, it was a strange mixture of devotion and greed that made up the personality of this amazing conqueror.

Cortes was as brilliant as he was ambitious. He had stirred up the rebelliousness of the people in Montezuma's vassal nations, and now he led, under his standard, many thousands of Indians in addition to his handful of Spanish adventurers. He was at last ready for the subjugation of Montezuma, and he decided to undertake this at once. Any delay, he felt, might strengthen the hands of Montezuma and weaken the allegiance of his own Indian followers. Above all he must guard against any surprise move on the part of the Aztec king.

Therefore, one day shortly after sunrise Cortes and a number of his soldiers, fully armed as usual, requested an audience with the king. Montezuma granted the request. For a time they conversed of ordinary matters, and then Cortes said:

"It has come to my ears, O Montezuma, that several of my white comrades have been killed in your vassal province of Almeria, and the governor of the province declares that he has killed these men at your instigation."

"This is not so!" cried Montezuma. "I have given no orders to kill any of your men."

"I believe you. But, nevertheless, I must send a report of this killing to my king who lives across the sea. And so I will ask you to summon the governor of Almeria in order that we may ascertain the truth of the matter."

Montezuma ordered his attendants to bring back the governor of Almeria. "As soon as he arrives," he promised Cortes, "we will question him."

"Very well," said Cortes. "And in the meantime, I must ask you to come to my quarters, where you are to stay with me until the truth is ascertained."

At these words a pallor spread over Montezuma's face. But

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he held his dignity. "White Chief," he said, "I have not been accustomed to be anybody's prisoner."

Cortes smiled. "You are not my prisoner. You are my guest."

With a sinking heart Montezuma ordered his nobles to take him to the headquarters of Cortes. Silently they raised him upon his royal litter and with bowed heads carried him out of his palace.

He was never to see this palace again.

## VI

THE governor of Almeria arrived within three weeks after the arrest of Montezuma. Cross-examined by Cortes and threatened with torture, he confessed that he had been acting under the instructions of the Aztec king. Cortes condemned the governor to be burnt at the stake, and then he ordered Montezuma to be bound with chains. As the shackles were being placed upon the unhappy king his attendants embraced his feet and inserted their mantles between the iron and his flesh.

But it was only for a short time that Cortes held him chained. He had learned the important lesson of the conqueror that the humiliation of the conquered, if it is to be properly digested, must be imposed in small doses. Accordingly, he unshackled Montezuma and assured him that he loved him like a brother. The king was wise enough to understand the worth of these protestations, but he held his peace, still hoping against hope that some miracle might save him, his country and his gods.

The miracle, however, never came. For some time, indeed, Cortes played a cat-and-mouse game with Montezuma. He allowed the king to transact his state business—always, of course, under the watchful eye of his Spanish guard. He delegated a young Spanish officer to acquaint Montezuma with the history and the customs of the European nations. And especially with

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their religion. For Cortes had grown truly fond of Montezuma. He was anxious to save his soul before he killed him.

As for Montezuma, he treated his Spanish captor with the utmost courtesy. He played with him a game called totolouque—a sort of bowling contest in which they threw down little golden figures with little golden balls. They played for high stakes, and the winnings were always divided between the attendants of Montezuma and the soldiers of Cortes.

Occasionally Cortes took Montezuma for a sail upon Lake Tezcuco. This he did in order to pretend to the Aztecs that he was Montezuma's "brother and host," and that therefore they need not worry about their king's future. He was determined, if possible, to win Mexico through treachery rather than through war. Indeed, he was somewhat afraid of war. For, in spite of his superior weapons, he feared that the Aztecs might win out against him because of their vastly superior numbers.

And so, with Montezuma as his hostage, he thought it best to play a waiting game. Using the king as his puppet, he virtually made himself the emperor of Mexico.

Little by little, whenever he thought it judicious to do so, he assumed a new function, a new prerogative, a new symbol to show to the Aztecs that it was he, and not Montezuma, who was their real king. And the Aztecs, after the manner of cowed nations, swallowed one insolence after another and made no effort to drive him out. For he always held the threat over Montezuma's life upon the slightest sign of rebellion on the part of his subjects.

One day, however, the rebellion did break out. And it happened in the following manner: Cortes, emboldened by the apparent submission of the Aztecs, had decided to establish the symbols of Christianity within the very precincts of the Aztec temple. Montezuma had warned him against this. For he knew the temper of his people. But Cortes, paying no attention to the warning, had placed an altar and a crucifix upon the topmost

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story of the temple. And then, as a conclusion to this religious ceremony, he had smashed the idols of the Aztec religion.

The result was exactly as Montezuma had feared. The Mexicans could brook all sorts of injuries against themselves. They could even endure the humiliation of their king. But they could not stand for the desecration of their gods.

There was a loud murmur, then an outcry of resentment and finally a rush to arms. Montezuma advised Cortes to fly before it was too late. "The gods of my country," he said, "have decided to revenge themselves upon you. I implore you to save your life while you may."

Cortes was alarmed. But he had no intention to fly. He was ready, if necessary, to fight it out. All Mexico had now been aroused against him. An unequal fight, to be sure, but all his life he had loved to fight against odds. If he lost, why, then, he lost nothing but his life. Everyone must die at some time. But if he won, all the riches of Mexico would be his. And everlasting glory. He turned to Montezuma. "I am determined to stay here. Let them drive me out if they can."

They besieged him in his fortress. "We want our gods. Give us back our gods!"

"And our king. Give us our king, our Montezuma!"

And then Montezuma, dressed in his royal robe, his golden sandals and his miter-shaped crown, stepped upon the parapet of the fortress in which he was being held prisoner. As he stood in the sight of his people, their clamor ceased.

He held out his hands to them. "I beg of you, my children, go back to your homes and live in peace with the white men."

"No peace with the white men!" cried Montezuma's brother, Cuitlahua. "We have sworn to kill them, every one!"

"Then kill me first," cried Montezuma, baring his breast to his people.

"Well spoken!" This from one of the Aztec warriors. "Better a speedy death than a lifelong disgrace!"

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A shower of stones and arrows, and Montezuma fell to the ground.

When the Aztecs realized what they had done, a wail of dismay arose in their midst. But it was too late.

Montezuma was taken to his apartment in the fortress. His wounds were not dangerous, but his will to live was gone. He refused all medical aid and the consolations of his Spanish captors. He tore the bandages away from his wounds, and turned his head to the wall.

When he died, even the followers of Cortes wept "as though," to quote one of them, Bernal Diaz, "he had been our own father." And no wonder, added Diaz, "considering the kind of man he was."

Such was the character of the last king of the Aztecs.

## VII

AS FOR CORTES and his Spaniards, their protracted fight against the besiegers, their daring escape from the fortress, the drowning of the soldiers who were weighted down by their gold as they tried to swim to safety across the lake to the mainland, the ambushes, the attacks, the repulses, the final conquest of Mexico, the treacherous murder of Montezuma's successor and the wanton destruction of that beautiful ancient city of the Aztecs—all this is another story. And an interesting story, too. For it shows how those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad with the lust of conquest. For several of the soldiers, after their triumph, killed one another in their quarrels about the division of the spoils. And as for Cortes himself, he won a country for his Spanish king and was rewarded with an icy welcome on his return. He was allowed to retain but a pittance of the treasure he had plundered in Mexico. Like Columbus, he died in poverty and neglect.

# **IVAN THE TERRIBLE**

*Important Dates in Life of Ivan the Terrible*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1530—Born in Russia.  | 1565—Threatened to abdicate.  |
| 1533—Proclaimed grand duke on the death of his father.            | 1569—Murdered St Philip, the metropolitan of Moscow. Began massacre and destruction of Great Novgorod, which he continued mercilessly for about a year. |
| 1544—Ascended the throne.   | 1575—Fought Sweden and Poland.  |
| 1547—Crowned first Russian czar. Selected a Romanov for his wife. | 1580—Killed his eldest son.   |
| 1550—Summoned first national assembly in Russia.                  | 1582—Conquered Siberia.   |
| 1552—Conquered Kazan.   | 1584—Became a hermit and died as the monk Jonah.  |
| 1554—Conquered Astrakhan.   |   |
| 1555—Routed the Tatars.   |   |
| 1564—Disappeared from Moscow.                                     |   |

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# Ivan the Terrible

1530-1584

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**I**VAN was born in the midst of a storm that threatened to rip the Muscovite heavens asunder. But this external tempest was only a prelude to the whirlwind of passions that were to blow in a perpetual fury within the head of this Russian prince.

At an early age he was left an orphan in the care of the power-hungry nobles who were plotting one against another for the possession of the throne. For at that period the Russian throne was neither elective nor hereditary. Whenever a czar died the strongest of his fighters seized the succession at the point of the sword. Among the chief of the royal trappings that embellished the throne were the carpet of red blood that led to it and the archways of flayed men that flanked it to the right and to the left.

The little Prince Ivan was brought up by a body of regents in an atmosphere of political harangues and military brawls. As a child he witnessed the sudden death of his mother who, after a harsh rule of several years, had been poisoned by some of her less fervent suitors. And he never forgot the gruesome spectacle of her opponents, strung up on gibbets at intervals all



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the way from Moscow to Novgorod. His earliest amusements were games he played with domestic animals. He was especially fond of throwing down his dogs from the top of a tower and watching them writhe in agony. Sometimes he varied the fun by roasting alive his pet cats—a sport that was enthusiastically endorsed by his tutors, who were quite intent upon bringing up the lad in the accepted traditions of a Muscovite nobleman. As he grew older and matured in his sensibilities he went about the streets of Moscow thrashing the men and violating the women. He was a blond giant whose arms carried the blows of a trip hammer, so that nobody cared to dispute his pugnacious or amatory impulses.

With this education behind him he became czar at the age of seventeen, amid the semibarbaric splendor of an oriental coronation. His first royal act was portentous. A delegation of his subjects from the town of Pskov had come to him with a petition. He replied by ordering his attendants to strip the group stark naked before him. Then he poured a pitcher of oil over them and was preparing to ignite them with a burning torch when something occurred to divert his attention. A messenger had rushed into the throne room with the news that the great bell atop the Kremlin had fallen. This had happened several times before and was considered to be an unfavorable omen. Ivan was so disturbed at the event—he was by nature fanatically superstitious—that he retired into a secret chamber with his councillors and completely forgot to ply his sport. Some great misfortune, he felt, was awaiting Russia.

And sure enough, the mishap of the Kremlin bell was the forerunner of a catastrophe. Within a few months a devastating fire broke out over Moscow. Seventeen hundred men and women and children perished in the flames.

It was whispered to Ivan that the fire had been due to witchcraft. "There are evil spirits in Moscow that we must hunt out immediately in order to prevent a recurrence of this fire."

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Accordingly, Ivan summoned the inhabitants of Moscow to assemble in front of the Kremlin for Sunday prayer. As the many thousands, unaware of his intentions, were kneeling bare-headed before him, he gave a prearranged signal to his gendarmes. An avalanche of arrests, a wholesale accusation, and the last smoldering embers of the Moscow fire were extinguished in a deluge of blood.

Apparently he felt relieved after this orgy of barbarism. For his conduct became slightly more heartening. "Call me," he commanded his ministers, "an assembly of the people's representatives from all parts of the realm."

The ministers looked at him blankly. Such a procedure was beyond their political ken. To be sure, they had heard vaguely of a parliament at the other end of the world, in England, but they had their grave doubts about the expediency of such legislative bodies.

"What do you want to discuss laws for, sire?" they asked Ivan.

Ivan laughed until his sides ached. "I don't want to discuss laws, you fools. I want to make a speech. . . ."

And so he summoned several hundred nobles to meet him at Moscow. Parliament convened under the open skies of the Kremlin Square. Ivan, an actor by nature, was delighted at the huge audience before whom he could display his political talents. He announced that a new era had dawned in the social order of Russia, an era characterized by a superior kind of justice and love. Tremendous was the applause from every side. He bowed his acknowledgment. "If I have been guilty of any misdeeds in the past," he continued solemnly, "I hereby wipe the slate clean of them. I am beginning my reign anew." He turned to the bishop. "You know that when I was three years old my father died. My other kinsmen took no care of me, and my powerful nobles thought of nothing save their own selfish gain. And while they multiplied their debaucheries and their

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plunders, I was compelled, because of my youth, to play deaf and dumb. They ruled as masters. . . . Oh speculators, depre-  
dators and dishonest judges," he cried, facing the nobles once  
more, "make ready now for the chastisement that you de-  
serve!"

Was he sincere in his change of heart? The following day he  
murdered a friend of his in the cathedral while the Gospel was  
being read.

### II

HE HAD an intellect and a will; he had, too, a trace of moral  
consciousness. He was constantly denouncing himself for his  
crimes. "I am a dog," he told himself again and again. Other  
people were only too eager to concur with him in this view.  
Once the bishop of Moscow, who was in the habit of speaking  
fearlessly, denounced him before the assembled faithful. "The  
very stones of this church cry out against you!"

"What," shouted Ivan, "have you, too, joined the rebels?"

"Nay, sire, I am but speaking for the good of your soul."

Ivan waited not a minute longer, but seized a broomstick  
and gave the bishop a severe drubbing. Then he stripped him  
of his garments and his office and condemned him to prison  
for life. "But before you go," he ordered, "give me your abso-  
lution."

"I can give you nothing but silence. My silence lays a sin  
upon your soul."

Ivan was trembling. "Go to prison, then. And damn your  
absolution!"

With the bishop out of the way, the czar returned to his  
unbridled orgies. "Be merry, friends, and forget remorse!" he  
bellowed across the banquet table in the great palace of Mos-  
cow. He was thrilled at the sight of his cronies blustering over  
their glasses of vodka. Only they mustn't be critical or question  
the future; they must accept. When clouds of gloom passed

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over his countenance they must dispel them with a shout. What if, outside the gaily lit palace, the city of Moscow lay shrouded in black? Here, within the banquet hall, a thousand candles poured down their light upon the tiaras of the great ladies, the decorations and the medals of the soldiers. Death to him who allows the slightest shadow of remorse to darken this Muscovite splendor!

At one of the banquets the czar noticed a nobleman with a sad face. He made it a point to visit him the following day and to ask him the reason for his sadness.

"Your Majesty," said the nobleman, "I am thinking of Russia's destiny. Our country is as backward as the devil's tail. For we, who are writing her history, are dipping our pen in blood instead of ink. . . . Have pity on your people, sire."

"My people are barbarians," answered Ivan.

"Then you must give them good laws to civilize them."

"I cannot."

"Ah, it is too much of a problem; it requires thought."

"Stop this nonsensical dribble!"

"Nay, sire, I shall talk freely. You are afraid to think, to civilize your nation, to civilize yourself."

"I am afraid of nothing! I shall roast you over the coals for calling me afraid!"

### III

IVAN was afraid of nothing. His hair was shaved to the scalp, and that was enough to frighten everything away from him. He gathered about him a band of ruffian followers who had pledged themselves to do his evil work. For they owed their lands and their houses and their very livelihood to the czar. These so-called *Opritchniki* came from a class of peasants who had been transferred from their own freeholdings to the domains immediately controlled by Ivan. In this way he was able to exact a feudal, slavish obedience from them. "He who possesses the

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land," he said, "possesses the souls of the people who live upon it."

From a nucleus of his newly dispossessed subjects he thus created a court following—made up of men with a slavish outlook on life, a slavish ignorance and a slavish superstition and blind allegiance to authority.

And then, suddenly, he disappeared from the palace. On December 3, 1564, he packed all his belongings and left Moscow without a word to anyone as to where he was going. His old courtiers trembled as they awaited the outcome of this secret departure of their mad czar.

They had not long to wait. A messenger from the czar rode into Moscow and announced that Ivan had gone off to teach a lesson to the free city of Novgorod. This city, he had heard, might be tempted to plan an alliance with Poland. To be sure, he had no proof that such an alliance was in the offing. Nor was there any war between Poland and Russia. But Ivan decided to be on the safe side. Should there ever be any war, he figured, it would be better to have dead neutrals than live ones. For a live neutral is always a potential enemy.

Accordingly, he marched into Novgorod with his band of *Opritchniki* and proceeded with a military execution of the sort meted out to cities taken in actual warfare. He threw the leading citizens of the town into prison and whipped them mercilessly until they divulged where their money was stored. He then routed the mass of inhabitants out of their homes and herded them into the public square. Here, in front of the assembled instruments of torture, his "arguments of persuasion" as he called them, he questioned each of them briefly and then condemned them to death. Whereupon the men, the women and the children, bound to sledges in batches of three, were driven down a steep slope into an ice-cold river which, however, owing to the force of the current, was incapable of freezing over. The *Opritchniki* rowed around in boats, and the moment a

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head appeared above the water they speared it with pikes. This massacre was a leisurely performance, for Ivan derived a great deal of aesthetic pleasure out of it, and he was therefore disinclined to let it end too briefly. About fifty thousand people were thus executed in the course of five weeks at the rate of about fifteen hundred a day. By a strange quirk of mind he ordered the imprisoned monks to offer prayers daily for the victims he had put to death. For he wanted to make sure of saving their souls. After the prayers had been uttered, he slew the monks—two thousand of them.

When there were practically no living creatures left in Novgorod Ivan struck at all the inanimate objects; razed the dwellings; fired the churches, destroyed the shops. And then, satiated with his hunger for destruction, he sat back and with tears in his eyes complained to his *Opritchniki*: "Ah me, I am so lonely. I have no friends. . . . Tell me, my children, why are you all so bitter against your Little Father?"

From Novgorod he journeyed to Pskov. Here he ordered a general pillage. The bishop approached him with gifts and spices. He handed the czar a plate of meat. Ivan shrank back horrified.

"What, you offer me meat? Why, it's Lent!"

"Yes, it is Lent," replied the bishop softly. "And are you ready to devour more human meat?"

Ivan left Pskov with his army of *Opritchniki* and returned to Moscow. He re-entered the city in a triumphal procession. Preceded by a company of buffoons, he rode on an ox with the symbol of his new clownish fraternity in his arms—a broom and the head of a dog. His followers, intoxicated with the memories of blood, their nostrils aquiver for more bloodshed, paraded wildly behind him. He ordered his former officials, the court dignitaries and the clergy, to be cast into prison. As usual, he did this work slowly, taking several months for the drawing up of the lists of his "unfaithful" victims. These victims underwent

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a long stretch of torture until they had hardly a breath of life left in their mutilated bodies. Then he summoned them to the public square for one final torture before their execution. Posters were nailed all over the city inviting the populace to attend "the great show." But when the "festive day" arrived not a single spectator was on hand to witness the event.

"Why are the people not here?" asked Ivan.

"Perhaps they are afraid, Your Majesty," ventured one of the *Opritchniki*.

"Afraid?" cried Ivan. "What have I ever done to make my people afraid?"

### IV

THE nations of western Europe were strangely curious about the huge Muscovite lands lying to the east. Though facts about Ivan's country were scarce, legends were not. One English traveler had brought back a fantastic account of Russian tribes "who died every autumn and who came to life again every spring." He described the great Volga River and the fish that men caught there—huge fish "which had the head, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet of a man . . . but which could not talk. . . ."

By the time of Elizabeth, however, English merchants who had established counting houses and trading posts in Russia began to bring back more authentic reports. The English queen sent an ambassador to Moscow. "Russian society," wrote this ambassador, "dazzles the eye but offends the nose, like a great lady who dresses in silks and jewels to cover dirty underwear." The czar, he reported, held dinners at which the tables were covered with goblets of solid gold, but to which the guests brought their own eating utensils, filthy-looking knives and spoons which they habitually carried in their belts. A garish society of men and women with the manners of children and with the cruelty of beasts.

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Ivan was very friendly to his English guest. In order to amuse him with a sample of his wit he poured a kettle of boiling soup over the head of his court jester. A little later, as he was reading a despatch brought to him by a messenger, he leaned so heavily on his spear that the point went right through the poor fellow's foot.

One day he summoned the ambassador to his private chambers and with a gleam in his eye asked him about the great ladies in England.

The ambassador raised his eyebrows. There were many beautiful and accomplished noblewomen in England, he said. There was Queen Elizabeth's niece, for example.

The czar beamed like a happy child. "I want an Englishwoman for my wife." Two of his wives had died in a strange manner; the third had been poisoned; the fourth had been hurled into a river; and the fifth had been shut up in a nunnery. One of his mistresses had suffered a violent death, because Ivan had discovered that he did not like "thin" women. At present he was living in comparative contentment with the daughter of one of his nobles.

The Englishman cleared his throat, and stated very hastily: "None of our court ladies, I am afraid, is available at present."

"How about your queen's niece?"

"My queen's niece is very ill, I've heard. Besides, she would never consent to leaving the Anglican Church and adopting your Russian religion."

"In that case," said the czar sadly, "I will have to throw you out of the window."

By way of entertaining the ambassador he invited him to a reception in his throne room one afternoon and told him to be prepared for a spectacle he would never forget. It happened that a nobleman who held a high place in the czar's councils had jestingly expressed a desire to be king. The czar, accepting



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the jest, stepped down from his throne and commanded the astounded nobleman to take his place.

"Pray be seated on the throne, my good man." The nobleman ascended the throne. "Bow down low to the new czar," Ivan commanded all his courtiers. He himself made a deep obeisance and kissed the nobleman's foot. "Oh, Little Father, now you know how it feels to hold supreme power." Saying this, Ivan rose to his feet and plunged a dagger into the heart of the enthroned man. "And now, too, you know how perilous that power is," he concluded jovially.

"I must have an Englishwoman for my wife. Give me a list of all the fair maids of England," he told the ambassador again and again.

"I have no such instructions from Her Majesty, but I beg to assure you that Her Majesty regards you as one of her choicest friends."

"You are an ignorant man, and you have no proper conception of your duties as an envoy. I am twice as powerful as your mistress."

"Sire, my mistress is the greatest princess in Christendom," replied the ambassador.

Ivan strode rapidly back and forth, his eyes shining with the intensity of his dream. "If I were mated to a slim girl from the great island in the West, I would be a real prince," he mumbled to himself. "I would let the hair grow back on my head. And I would bathe myself and anoint myself with perfumes." He wheeled suddenly on the ambassador. "But look at me now. I am a barbarian. Answer me, am I not?"

"No, Your Majesty," replied the ambassador.

"No, of course not," repeated Ivan to himself. "My ancestors were barbarians. And so are all the Russian dogs around me. But I am not. I am a *real man*." Then his eyes grew bright with an overwhelming idea. "That is why everyone hates me."

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE

### V

"NO, I AM NOT a real man," he thought to himself when nobody was present. "I must really make a confession before the world. I am an evil-smelling dog, living in drunkenness, adultery, brigandage and murder."

He had a superstitious fear that an evil doom awaited him. He took the English ambassador into his private room and showed him his precious stones. He imagined that they were slowly changing color—an omen which, as he believed, prophesied his death through poison. On one occasion he drew a circle on his table and placed upon it a group of black spiders—some of them inside the circle and the rest of them outside. "See," he said, crushing the spiders within the circle, "they are doomed to die while the others run away. . . . Doomed to die, just like me. All of us are caught in the magic circle of fate." And then, bringing his fist down once more upon the struggling insects, he cried, "It's no use struggling against your fate. . . ."

And at night, when all were asleep, Ivan would call to his bedside three blind old men who had grown gray in his service and who were quite at home and unafraid in the dark. These eyeless men were his masters in the stillness of the night. They sat by him to comfort him in his loneliness and to drive away his disagreeable memories of the day.

"You who have vision at such a time as this," he whispered, "tell me what you have learned in your wisdom about all the rest of us. Are we blind, or are we able to see?"

In his fifties Ivan became insanely religious. He lived the life of a hermit and died as the monk Jonah.



# CATHERINE THE GREAT

*Important Dates in Life of Catherine the Great*

- 1729—Born at Stettin, Germany.
- 1744—Taken to Russia, to be affianced to Crown Prince Peter.
- 1745—Formally married at St Petersburg.
- 1762—Empress Elizabeth died, and Peter, who was a weakling and unpopular, became czar. The regiments of the guard, led by Gregor Orloff, deposed Peter and made Catherine queen. Later Orloff, and many others, became Catherine's lovers.
- 1768—Began war against the Turks. Won four years later. Potemkin, one of Catherine's latest lovers, becomes all powerful in state affairs.
- 1772—Russia shared with Austria and Prussia in the first partition of Poland.
- 1787—Crimea incorporated with Russia.
- 1796—Died, after ruling thirty-five years.

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# Catherine the Great

1729—1796

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**I**N THE Church of Our Lady of Kazan a little German girl, scarce sixteen, is being wed to an imbecile of twenty-one. It is one of the most important marriages of the age, for it joins the hand of the Anhalt-Zerbst princess to Peter Feodorovich, Grand Duke of Holstein, favorite nephew of the Empress Elizabeth and heir apparent to the throne of all the Russias. What matter if the slight wisp of a girl has an ache in the head from the crown that has been pressing down on her forehead for seven hours throughout the splendid ceremony? What matter if she is heart weary at being torn from her simple German home, her kindly father and his prayer books, her brothers and her sisters, the patient mother, the cheery hearth? What matter if she has been constrained to undergo religious conversion and to fast for three days in the stuffy chapel while an endless chant of hymns and benedictions have followed one another to signify her renunciation of the Lutheran creed and her adoption into the Greek orthodox faith? Soon this wedding ceremony will be over, all her discomfort a thing of the past—and she a grand duchess.

As she knelt by the side of her youthful husband he grinned

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

impishly at her. A maid of honor had just whispered something into his ear. He said in a low tone full of malice: "I must be careful, my bride. I have just been warned not to move my head for a single instant while they pronounce the sacrament over us. For there is a superstition that the one who moves first will die. And I'm sure that no one wants to see you outlive me."

The young girl flushed at this biting jest but said nothing. Gossip had it that Peter was feeble minded, and that he was used to playing pranks and saying such things. She shut her eyes tightly and scarcely heard the words that made her his wife.

They rose from their knees. The cathedral burst into song. A thousand candles spread a dazzling light over the pageantry of the nobility, the mitred bishops, the multitude of foreign diplomats and the stout old empress who presided over the nuptials like a giant queen bee buzzing about her hive.

At last the lights are low, the wedding guests gone. The long day with its vexations and its trials is ended. Time for bed—the huge, canopied bed with its massive velvet covers into which the maids-in-waiting tuck the dazed little girl and leave her alone as they bow themselves silently out. She doubles up under the blanket and presses her cheek against the pillow with a frightened glance at the empty space beside her.

She hardly knows the difference between the sexes. She is sheer innocence at sixteen. Suddenly she wishes she were back home. But that would mean a long sleigh ride over many hundreds of frozen miles, and many changes of horses and hotels, before she would be able to meet her father and her mother again. She remembers their last words: "Be a good girl, Sophie, don't cry." And she is determined not to cry, for her parents' sake.

Her husband awakes her from her half reverie. He has entered the bridal chamber in his military boots. His face is flushed with wine, his breath heavy. Her eyes look at him appealingly.

## CATHERINE THE GREAT

They are wide with terror. But she makes a pretense at calmness. "Good evening, Peter."

He grumbled an incoherent reply. A strange, half-demented youth, this Peter of Russia. At fourteen he had not learned the simple reading and writing lessons of a child of six. His mind wandered. He had a vacant look in his eye. They had flogged him for his stupidity, determined to make a man out of him against his will. They had bullied him and disciplined him and only succeeded in further undermining his already frail constitution. He was a puny fellow, and most of the time he acted like a hurt and bewildered, and vicious, child.

"Good evening, Peter," she repeated. At first, when she had arrived in Moscow, he had burst with eagerness into the royal reception room to have a look at the young lady they had chosen for his bride. But during the courtship his curiosity had given way to indifference. He neglected her and went back to his military games. No one paid much attention to him, so busy were the empress and her courtiers with the arrangement of the marriage celebration. He had been left to sulk by himself.

He threw himself on the bed without taking off his boots, without saying a word to his young bride.

"I have been waiting for you. What has kept you?" she said in a shy voice. He stared at the ceiling and mumbled, "Been playing with my soldiers." His tin toy soldiers, of which he was inordinately fond. "Nobody likes me to play with them," he continued in a dull voice. "I don't want to have anything to do with people, not even you." He didn't look at her. He spoke as if he were rehearsing a scene to himself. "Not even you." In a few moments he was fast asleep and snoring. And there were tears in the eyes of the little bride.



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

### II

THE following day the empress sent a young married lady of the court to question the newly wed couple. The empress was eager, very eager for an heir.

"Your Majesty," reported the maid, "the grand duke is singularly cold and indifferent. The bride is brokenhearted. She weeps."

"She must stop that nonsense," declared Elizabeth. "A wife who sincerely loves her husband is not found weeping on her honeymoon. I didn't force her to marry him. Her mother said she was perfectly willing. By the Czar Peter, she will present him with a son, or I am not the empress of Russia!"

Several months passed, and no sign of a future czarevitch. Elizabeth summoned the young bride. She questioned her sternly. Was she behaving as a good wife ought to behave? Had she submitted to her husband? Was she going to present them with an heir?

"Little Mother, give me time," whispered the girl. She did not relate to the empress how the grand duke crawled into bed night after night with his muddy boots, rolled over on his side and snored; how he never spoke to her except to snarl, or to boast of the women he had conquered. He had eyes for everyone but his wife.

The months went by. The empress appointed, as her niece-in-law's confidante, a woman whose aptitude for bearing children was legendary. The matron was forever walking around in a state of prospective motherhood—a gentle hint to young Sophie, or as she was now called since her conversion, Catherine. The months passed, and then the years. And still Catherine knew nothing of married love. Not a glance from Peter, not a kind word. The tears no longer came to her eyes as easily as in the first few weeks. Her sorrow, however, grew deeper. All around her, the young men and the young women of the court

## CATHERINE THE GREAT

were answering the call of love. Her own instincts had never been awakened. They were in a state of atrophy. She went through the bitterest mental anguish. She passed from sixteen to twenty, from twenty to twenty-five. The duke graduated from playing with tin soldiers to drilling real, living soldiers. He was never seen except in uniform. He kept very much to himself, waving his sword in the air fiendishly and addressing loud commands and curses to an empty room. Right before his eyes the charms of his young wife—still a virgin—blossomed and ripened into sensitive maturity. But he failed to see them. He was too busy with his Potsdam regiment which he had hired from Prussia. He was wrapped up in a hysterical worship of Frederick the Great and in the harlots of the Russian court.

Catherine read to herself, sat in her chambers and embroidered, gazed out of the window and looked for some force to free her. She became fond of hunting, riding a black charger through the silent forests in the dawn, pressing her face full tilt against the rain, uncombing her hair and allowing it to fly about her ears that were brown as nuts. On these gallops she occasionally met a young courtier, handsome as an Apollo and fickle as the wind. He had a habit of coming upon her at unexpected moments—like the sudden flashing of a pleasant landscape at the turn of a road. He began to follow her on her hunting trips. He followed her with honeyed whispers and offers of love. She had never known love and he would be her self-appointed teacher. "Dear Catherine," he would whisper, "let me show you the meaning of a caress and the words of a man who knows how to adore."

She drew the reins of her horse. "How dare you take such liberties, Sergei! I am a Grand Duchess."

"You are a woman, Catherine." He pressed her hand. Instinctively she recoiled. "My husband——"

"A brute with a low, mean appetite—basking in the favor of court prostitutes."

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"Some day he will be your czar!"

Sergei's eyes narrowed. "A wretched day that will be, Catherine. . . ."

She was held in the spell of his eyes. His lips were as ripe as strawberries. Her heart ached. She trembled on her horse.

"Let me take you into a kingdom greater than the czar's. The kingdom of happiness, Catherine."

She withdrew in fright, jerked the reins of her horse and rode silently off into the forest.

But she couldn't drive Sergei from her mind. . . .

One morning she was summoned peremptorily to the apartment of the empress.

"Catherine," said Her Majesty, "do you realize that you have been married nine years?"

"Yes, madam."

"And still no child. Tell me, is there anything the matter with the grand duke, or is it you?"

Catherine blushed. "Not me, Little Mother."

"There are rumors," resumed the empress, "that Peter is not quite well, physically. Dear, dear, to think that a nephew of mine could be so unvirile. Catherine"—her voice lost its tone of command and became softer, with a touch of affection—"I know what you've been through, my poor child. And yet you must give me a grandnephew. If Peter cannot be a father, you must find someone else."

"Little Mother!"

"You must take a lover. Do not be so shocked. I, too, have had my lovers. . . . Remember, it is a question of perpetuating our dynasty. The throne of all the Russias must never be vacant."

"Yes, Little Mother," whispered Catherine breathlessly.

"You understand it is my express command."

"Yes, Little Mother. . . ."

That evening she beckoned to a tall, blond cavalier with a



*Catherine the Great*



*Louis* XIV

## CATHERINE THE GREAT

sun-tanned face who emerged from the shadows to meet her. She stroked his smooth beard. The moon was a deluge of silver that bathed them with a magic light. "I am yours, Sergei," she whispered.

### III

MIDWINTER in Moscow, nine years later. The body of the Empress Elizabeth is being taken over the snow to her final resting place. Preceding the hearse comes a choir of singers—old bearded men who walk with stately step, and red-cheeked youngsters who rub their frozen fingers and occasionally slip out of the ranks to engage in a caper or two until soundly cuffed in the head. The erstwhile Grand Duke Peter leads the section of mourners. He looks neither to the left nor to the right. On his face there is an expression of sheer idiocy. The peasants that line the streets bow humbly down before their new czar and offer up a silent prayer for their new czarina.

The services are held over the dead. The burial is completed. Catherine retires to her spacious chambers in the palace. She looks down upon the square below. A few workmen hurrying back from their labors, a few streetwalkers commencing to ply their trade. Catherine's future with a husband like Peter is as gloomy as the shadows that lie over Moscow. Even as the grand duke he has made her life unbearable. But now that he has become, on the death of the Empress Elizabeth, czar of all the Russias, now that his demented words and actions can be translated into absolute laws, her future life holds all the terrors of hell. It is rumored that he has threatened to lock her up in a nunnery as his first official act. She shudders and pulls her wrap more tightly around her shoulders. Daggers of ice hang down from the roof tops, and piles of snow are banked against the window sills.

A burly officer of the guard in military uniform was swaggering along the street. Catherine looked at him and narrowed her

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eyes. In the last reflection of the twilight she saw his muscular face, his huge hands swinging carelessly by his side, his fingers folded decisively into a fist that seemed to hold his own self-confidence wrapped up within it.

"Who is that man? I have seen him before."

These words were addressed to her maid who came respectfully to the window and peered into the street.

"That, Your Royal Highness, is the aide-de-camp, Gregor Orloff," answered the maid.

"You seem to know him."

"Yes, Your Royal Highness. Most of us young ladies have cause to know him well—very well."

"Ah, Natashka," smiled Catherine. "I too would like to know him—very well. I like the way he holds himself. Natashka, you must summon him to my chambers immediately, but you must not breathe a word as to who sent you. My name is not to be known to him, you understand?"

"You are discreet, Your Royal Highness. I shall visit the taverns, for that is where I shall find him. I shall summon him hither at once. I shall not mention a word about who sent me."

Catherine prepared herself for the tryst. Years ago it would have meant to her more than a mere incident. That was in the days when she had known Sergei. But there had been others after Sergei, innumerable trysts. She slid into her lounging gown, smoothed the velvet sofa and easy chairs, ordered the cognac, prepared the cigarettes. Instinctively her mind went back to the breathless months she had spent with young Stanislaus, the diplomat from Poland. At times she was convinced that Stanislaus was the only man to whom she had ever given her heart completely. She had come to him on the rebound after the unhappy termination of her relations with Sergei. She sighed as she approached the mirror and glanced at herself briefly before she covered her face with a veil.

The tall, sturdy young officer was conducted into her pres-

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ence. Possessing no curiosity in the fulfillment of his animal desires, he accepted the unknown woman without a question. When he was ready to go, she drew the veil slowly from her eyes.

"You have made love to an empress," she said.

In an instant he was down on his knees before her.

"Tell me something about yourself. You appeal to me very strongly. Have you any brothers?"

"There are three of us, Your Highness: Feodor, Alexis and I. All of us are soldiers in the Royal Guard."

"Let us drink to your Royal master, Gregor—my husband, the czar of all the Russias." She poured for him a drink of vodka. Silently they drank. She looked at him shrewdly. "What do you think of my husband, the czar?" Instinctively he took a few steps backward. "Well, come now. What do you think of him?"

"Your Highness, he is my czar."

She laughed, amused at his answer. "You're loyal enough to the czar, but not exactly in love with him, hey?"

He blushed a deep red but said nothing in reply.

"Well, how would you like to be in love with the czarina?"

"I am not worthy of the honor, Your Highness!"

"Exactly. You're a common Cossack and nothing else. You behave like a boor, falling on your knees at the slightest pretense with not the least bit of grace. And yet I'm strangely attracted to you. There is power in your arms, Gregor."

"Your Highness, I do not understand."

"There is power in your arms, Gregor. And it is a happy circumstance that you and your two brothers are members of the palace guard. Have they, too, got strong arms?"

"Your Majesty!"

"Strong arms, Gregor, arms to strike down—the czar!"

"Is this a command, Your Majesty?"

She nodded her head. "There will be a palace revolution. . . .



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The army will follow you as if by magic. You must take him prisoner quietly. There must be no unnecessary fuss."

He was on his knees again.

"God bless you, Your Majesty!"

"In your presence, Gregor, I am not Your Majesty. Call me Catherine. Just simply Catherine."

"Catherine," he murmured. "Catherine the Great!"

### IV

THE mad Peter was taken prisoner and strangled to death. Catherine crowned herself empress and made Gregor Orloff a count with a pension and a foremost place in her entourage. At first she planned to marry him, but the nobility objected so vehemently that she was compelled to abandon the project. Still she gave him three children and all the wealth and worldly resources at her command. Whenever she held court he was found lounging at her side in his thick, muddy boots, speaking illiterately and endlessly, mouthing loud oaths and exuding garlic, blowing his saliva on the marble floors and ready to kill or to die at the slightest command of his empress.

"Well, Gregor, we rule the world, you and I!"

She was an ambitious queen. "I shall draw up a constitution for the people, Gregor, and I shall have it approved by all the great lawyers in the realm." She closeted herself with parchment and pen and with the writings of the French philosophers, Diderot and Voltaire. She invited a thousand deputies to assemble from all parts of Russia at the Kremlin and to discuss the new legal code. One of the provisions concerned the emancipation of all the serfs in Russia. But the nobles objected, and the clause was omitted. The Russian peasants continued to live like beasts of the field.

"Little Mother, you have grand ideas," remarked Orloff, chewing an onion. "Blest if I can understand them at all, for

## CATHERINE THE GREAT

I'm no good at reading and writing." He clasped her in his bear-like embrace. "Ah, but I'm pretty good at understanding your kisses, am I not?" And Catherine, who had acquired the reputation of being the most educated woman in Europe, smiled at this handsome barbarian and softly answered, "Yes, Gregor."

He followed her around with adoring eyes. He batted on her charms, and yet he was gluttoned with their too lavish sweetness. Sometimes, in the secret of the night, he fled to his favorite haunts and tasted the coarser fare of the humbler sisters of the queen—the women of the barracks and the streets. For, lolling amidst the riches of the court, he was yet unable to free himself from his vulgar origin in the gutter.

Yet Catherine encouraged him in his vulgarity. She consulted with him about all her plans, and she yielded to his every whim like a slave. For she realized that she owed her throne to this blustering, uncouth swordsman who was the idol of the Russian army. She could ill afford now to cast him off, for he might induce the army to rebel against her, just as he had induced it to rebel against Peter. With every moment of her life now she must repay Orloff for his assassination of the mad czar. What a price, to be paid to what a lout!

And yet this lout had his little spurts of courage and even of nobility. The dreaded plague of smallpox broke out in Moscow. A short while before, Catherine had sent for an English doctor who had introduced the practice of vaccination in his own country with great success. At first the nobility at the the Russian court objected to having the doctor experiment on them with such a revolutionary expedient. They were all superstitious, and they felt firmly convinced that every human being must inevitably pass through a period of smallpox and that it was hazardous to interfere with nature. Nevertheless, Catherine allowed herself to be vaccinated. And on the following day Orloff was vaccinated also. The nobility then flocked to the

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doctor and accepted his inoculations. The peasantry, however, refused to receive the "ministrations of the devil." They just prayed for a miracle and died by the thousands. Catherine sent among them a number of physicians armed with the British doctor's cure. But the peasants gathered in a mob and vowed instant death to any doctor who would dare to approach them. It was at this juncture that Catherine sent Orloff at the head of his soldiers to force the people into the hospitals which she had prepared for them.

Firm in the belief of his own immunity from the disease, Orloff went among the peasants and forced them at the point of the gun to accept vaccination and trained nurses. He nursed many of them himself and superintended their removal to the hospitals. He succeeded at last in subduing the plague and he came back to his empress a real hero.

She built him a triumphal arch with the inscription, "To him who saved Moscow from the plague." She struck a medal with his likeness to commemorate his bravery. Orloff had reached the zenith of his career.

And now, bristling with medals and drunk with glory, he went to war as a general against the Turks. One solitary night, as he was sitting in his tent and dreaming of his good fortune, word was brought to him that Catherine had taken another lover at Moscow.

A furious rage consumed him. He left his soldiers and galloped wildly over the Russian steppes to the court. When he reached the gates of Moscow the guard refused to let him in. He was escorted out of the city and shut up under lock and key in his own palace at Gatchina.

Softly the empress spoke to her confidential maid. "What do we do with an old garment when its colors are worn and faded?"

"We throw it away, Your Majesty."

The empress nodded. "You are right. We throw it away."

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### V

ONE evening Catherine retired after supper to her drawing room to play her favorite game of whist. The young dandies of the court, each seeking to win her favor, applauded her hand and showered her with compliments which made the stout, susceptible empress who was now approaching fifty blush with pleasure. A smooth-mannered, insignificant army subaltern had managed to elbow his way close to the empress. Alexis Orloff, the brother of Gregor, scowled at the liberty the new courtier was taking.

"Move away," he ordered. "Go back to the rabble!"

The subaltern looked scornfully at Alexis and bent down to whisper into the queen's ear: "An expert game, Your Majesty, played by a beautiful hand."

Catherine looked up and smiled at the fellow's boldness.

Alexis Orloff grasped him by the elbow and pushed him a few steps away from the card table in the direction of a billiard table that was standing near by.

"Take your hands off me, you son of a dog!" cried the young fellow to the veteran soldier. His voice attracted everybody's attention. A first-class quarrel was in the brewing, and the courtiers crowded eagerly around the two men.

"Scum of the sewer," shouted Alexis, "you have no right to address the empress with such familiarity!"

"I will address Her Majesty as it pleases her, and not you," replied the subaltern.

Catherine looked on, amused at the spectacle of two courtiers quarreling over her.

Alexis, unable to contain his fury, snatched up a billiard ball from the table and hurled it at the presumptuous young man. The latter tried to jump aside, but he was too late. The missile caught him in the eye, cracked the eyeball instantly and sent a shower of blood over his face. Friends rushed up and band-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

aged him. The pain was intense, but the young subaltern stood his ground in silent defiance.

"Who is that young man?" asked Catherine of one of her courtiers.

"That is Gregory Potemkin, a man of no account," was the reply.

Of no account! The quarrel was the making of his brilliant fortune. He was a poet with the recklessness of a cavalier. "Love demands his own from every heart, be it the heart of a queen or the heart of a commoner," he writes her. "The moment I set eyes on you I knew I must embrace the majesty of all Russia and hold the fairest scepter of the world in my arms."

The heart of the corpulent, faded, but still coquettish little empress was unable to resist such daring love-making as this. She held out her arms to the young man who had sacrificed an eye for her smile. He was a dark-complexioned, laughing, swaggering young devil of a poet whose lips uttered words of fire and held intimate converse with the stars. He had a child's impulsiveness and an actor's genius. One day he would tramp through the streets of Moscow in the clothes of a beggar, chewing garlic and spitting on all the passers. The next day he would lounge in velvet robes and eat dainty food out of golden plates. Sometimes he lolled for days in his dressing gown, composing poetry, or biting his nails and passing his time in complete indolence. Yet, when the fancy seized him, he could put on his soldier's uniform and lead the army to battle with the energy and the genius of an Alexander the Great.

He held the empress spellbound with his charm. He was as unpredictable as the March wind and as ardent as the tropical sun.

One day he appeared before her with the request that she allow him to take the religious vow and to enter a monastery. Knowing full well the impish spirit in which this pleasure-loving, wine-guzzling poet of hers had made the request, she decided in a similar spirit of fun to play him a trick.

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"Much as it breaks my heart to lose you, Potemkin," she answered, "I understand that you have been called by a higher voice, and I must let you retire to your cell."

"Farewell," said Potemkin in a weak voice, amazed at this sudden turn of events, but determined to act out his role to the end. He entered the monastery, plucking the flowers in the garden with the other priests and sleeping on a hard wooden bed—for exactly two months. Then he could stand it no longer. He made his escape and returned sheepishly to Catherine's boudoir.

They lived together for fifteen years, the "Little Mother" and the "Little Lord." As they became older their attachment for each other grew stronger. Together they planned court functions, carnivals, theater parties, hunts, games, picnics and royal pranks. The business of state was all but neglected. Together the lovers read Plutarch's *Lives* and dreamed of an Eastern empire patterned after that of Alexander the Great. One day Potemkin threw down the book and leaped to his feet, exclaiming, "If anyone should come and tell me that I should never attain this dream, I would shoot myself through the head!" And the moment arrived indeed when the queen and her lover fitted out an argosy of twenty ships and sailed down the Dnieper to the Crimea—the territory which their soldiers had just won from the Turks. It was a magnificent procession. The ships were crowded with pleasure-seeking courtiers and decked with canopies of purple and gold. The peasants stood widemouthed on the banks. The news of the procession had traveled all over the world. It was believed that the Russians would not stop at the Crimea, but would drive the Turks clear out of Constantinople; and bets were offered that the adventurous queen and her picaresque hero would take possession of that most splendid city for the first time in centuries.

But the fears of Europe and the dream of the romantic couple ended at the Crimea. And here, too, ended the magnificent

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career of Gregory Potemkin. The Turks renewed the war on the Russian army, and, aided by the French, they held Catherine's troops at bay. The queen journeyed back to Moscow while Potemkin stayed with the army in the south. The queen, as was her wont, amused herself with new lovers in his absence, and for a time Potemkin not only didn't mind but actually encouraged the practice, for he felt sure of his power to bring her back into his arms upon his return to the capital. Indeed, he became a pander to her lusts and derived great joy out of picking young men for her.

But he was growing older and more cynical, this shrewd, urbane and unpredictable poet and swordsman. Suddenly he became jealous of his rivals. Especially of the latest cavalier whom the empress had taken into her confidence. He rushed back to Moscow and demanded the fellow's dismissal. Many times in the past he had done this sort of thing. And every time Catherine had obeyed him like a lamb. Now, however, she refused to listen to him. She was determined to keep her young Zubov. Never had this happened before.

Gregory Potemkin understood. He came down with a fever. But he refused to go to bed. Instead, he left Moscow in a carriage and set out for his army. He wanted to die on the battlefield. But Fate would have it otherwise. The fever grew worse. He stuffed himself with food at a last great banquet, reminiscent of the many he had enjoyed in better days. He devoured an enormous quantity of salt pork and pungent spices, together with a goose and a duck, all of which he washed down with his favorite wine. Then he crawled out on the roadside to die.

## VI

THE little old woman was walking in her royal park. She was sixty now, and toothless, but she still invited young men of twenty to her boudoir. She took a pinch of snuff from her snuff-

## CATHERINE THE GREAT

box and sneezed. It was deepest winter, and the ground was frozen over. She gripped her cane firmly with the last bit of strength she had. Within full view of her tired eyes was the monument she had raised to Gregor Orloff for his bravery in the plague. Near by towered an obelisk to commemorate a victory won by General Potemkin. And there were the shades of other monuments standing in the frozen ground of the queen's own memory.

She turned weakly to her maid, a woman as old and decrepit as herself. "Ah, Natashka," she said, "if you and I were only fifteen again! . . ." A group of boys rushed by. They were chasing their dogs, and giving no heed or salute of any kind to the empress. The maid called after them in a rebuking voice.

"Hush," whispered Catherine. "Do not bother them. No one cares for old women. And why should they?" She drew her wrap more tightly around her shoulders. "It is bitter cold. Let us go inside for tea." A few steps from the palace door the empress paused and tapped a spot on the ice-caked ground thoughtfully. "Soon it will be spring, Natashka, and in this very place the snowdrop will push out its petals. On this spot I met Sergei Saltikov, my first lover. I was just twenty. We met at night in the spring. . . . Thirteen lovers have come and gone, and the years have brought the frost into my heart. A new year, a new spring, a new snowdrop rising out of the frozen ground. And I—I can no longer bend my back to taste its fragrance. The little flower is more worthy of God than I. For it never has lost its virgin whiteness. Ah, Natashka, I am afraid God is angry with me."

"Why, Your Majesty, how can you say that? You have been good to your people. You have opened hospitals for foundling children and destitute mothers. You have sent girls to be educated in the schools of Russia. You have instituted many reforms to make life better and happier for your people. You are in very deed our Little Mother."



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

“Yes, but I am a sinner, Natashka. For all my life I have played an unfair game. And an *unhappy* game. I have bought the love of thirteen men, and I have given my love to none. And that, Natashka, is the secret of my sin—and my restlessness. I have always turned from one man to another, seeking for the experience of the one true love. And I have never found it, never once.” She was silent for a moment. “And yet they who come after me, shall they call me Catherine the Great?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“It is bitter cold, Natashka. Let us hurry in.”

**LOUIS XIV**

*Important Dates in Life of Louis XIV*

- 1638—Born at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.
- 1643—Became king at death of his father.
- 1659—Married his cousin, the Infanta Maria Theresa.
- 1661—Became his own first minister at death of Mazarin.
- 1667—Beginning of the long series of wars which lasted to the end of his reign.
- 1684—Madame de Maintenon became his unofficial wife shortly after the death of Maria Theresa.
- 1713—Signing of the Peace of Utrecht.
- 1715—Died.

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# Louis XIV

1638–1715

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**F**ROM earliest childhood Louis XIV had been brought up to believe that he was made of superior clay. There were two types of human beings in this world, he was told—princes and mortals. And it had been his privilege to be born into the princely race of immortals. He was not only a favorite of heaven, but—he was led to believe—his body and his soul were compounded of the very essence of heaven. The royal seed, in other words, was made of divine substance.

This ridiculous yet sincere conviction of his semidivinity motivated the conduct of Louis XIV from beginning to end. He believed that he possessed the intellect and the powers of a god. He called himself the Sun King. He thought that, like Apollo, the god of the sun, he brought light and warmth and splendor to the entire human race. He felt that God had created the world in order that he, Louis XIV, might dazzle it with his greatness.

And, curiously enough, many of his biographers have been so dazzled as to take him at his own valuation. One of them (Hilaire Belloc) writes that “not even in death did Louis permit

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

a descent from the more than human place assigned to him." And another biographer (Louis Bertrand) tells us that Louis XIV was the most sublime type of man ever produced in France because his "whole life was spent in making war. . . . Never has anyone loved a military career as he loved it."

A rather strange reason, it would seem, for the deification of a human being. However, the biographers are correct when they point out his insatiable fondness for bloodshed. This was due to his environment. He was brought up in a warlike atmosphere. Born in 1638, ten years before the end of the Thirty Years' War, Louis was taught to regard military glory as the greatest aim in life. The perverted morals of a world at war were the morals which were most vigorously impressed upon his childish mind. Secret diplomacy, lying, cheating, selfishness, greed—these were the ideals upon which he was nurtured. "He had already (as a child)," writes M. Bertrand, "achieved that hereditary ability to hide his feelings and thoughts—that profitable and necessary gift of dissembling which is one of the greatest qualities in a king."

Almost from infancy he was taught to go through life with a chip on the shoulder. His teachers devised all sorts of war games for him. He blustered through a childhood of continual quarreling and fighting and bullying. He had the temper of a tiger and the manners of a spoiled brat. An occasional spanking upon his royal posterior might have been a good thing for his soul. But, sheltered by the absurd fiction that whatever a prince does is right, he grew up with a hobnailed personality that trampled viciously over everything and everybody. His *valet de chambre*, La Porte, gives us an interesting, if not very flattering, picture of his life at the age of thirteen. "From Montereau," writes La Porte, "we traveled to Corbeil, where Louis requested Monsieur (his younger brother) to sleep in his bedroom. . . . When they awoke in the morning, Louis XIV, without thinking, spat on Monsieur's bed. The latter spat back purposely on Louis's bed.

## LOUIS XIV

Louis, somewhat angry, spat in Monsieur's face, whereupon Monsieur jumped up on Louis's bed and urinated on it. The latter did the same on his brother's bed. . . ." And so on. Note the subtle manner in which La Porte condemns the conduct of Monsieur and condones the action of the king. Monsieur misbehaves "purposely," but Louis merely indulges in a mischievous prank "without thinking." The king can do no wrong.

For the thirteen-year-old Louis was already king of France. He had succeeded to the throne at the age of five. He was not crowned, however, until he was fourteen. In the meantime he lived under the regency of his mother and the tutelage of his mother's prime minister and paramour, the Italian adventurer, Mazarin. A clever hypocrite himself, Mazarin gave the young king a thorough course in hypocrisy. He counseled him "to treat the nobles of the blood like the dirt beneath his feet—never to allow himself to be on intimate terms with any of his courtiers—to preserve a stern face when people asked favors—to cultivate his innate and regal gift of dissembling—to maintain an impenetrable secrecy in the conduct of all state affairs—and to promise everything and do nothing."

The old diabolical system of imperialistic ethics, as proclaimed through all the centuries of barbarism from Machiavelli to *Mein Kampf*.

The young king had a whole notebook full of these perverted maxims. Most prominent among them was the following: "Homage is due to kings. Their will is law." His writing masters had him copy these words over and over again.

As a child, Louis XIV was of better than average intelligence. He had a quick mind and a perceptive eye. And Mazarin cultivated in him a love for beautiful things as well as a passion for arrogant deeds. Mazarin himself was an aesthete who delighted in music and statuary, silks and laces, mirrors and jewels and paintings and books. He was a good deal of a dandy. He sup-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

plied himself with all sorts of scented ointments and perfumes. These he used not only on himself, but on his two pet monkeys. Yet, in spite of his foppery, he was a genuine lover of beauty. He almost made a religion of it. He had one of the finest art collections in the world. His greatest regret, when he lay on his deathbed, was that he must leave all this splendor behind him.

It was through Mazarin that Louis met the one woman whom he passionately loved and whom he never possessed. This woman was Mary Mancini. Louis, twenty years old at the time, was lying dangerously ill with a fever at Calais. He had been struck down in the general pestilence that had spread from the exposed graves of the dead soldiers at Dunkirk. His life was despaired of. His brother was already being courted by the professional parasites in the expectation that he would shortly come into the throne. But Louis recovered from the illness, and his recovery was due largely to the tender nursing of the eighteen-year-old Mary Mancini, the daughter of Mazarin's sister.

During his convalescence the king enjoyed the only happy period of his life. Because it was the only *human* period of his life. Daily meetings with Mary, meaningful glances, hurried caresses, whispers, dreams. But the dreams were not to be fulfilled. For Mary Mancini was not of the royal blood. Having had his way all his life, Louis expected to have his way this time, too. He demanded a union with Mary Mancini. But his mother forbade it. Mazarin forbade it. All the nobles forbade it. There was only one voice that spoke in his favor. Christina, of Sweden. She herself had abdicated her throne in favor of love, and she advised him to do likewise. But Louis was unwilling to give up his throne. And so he retained his glory and forswore his love. Even a king, he learned, could not have everything he demanded in this world of unfulfilled desire.

He married his cousin, the fair and submissive and dwarflike

## LOUIS XIV

daughter of King Philip of Spain. He enjoyed the caresses of many mistresses. But he never was able to bestow upon another the genuine affection he had felt for Mary Mancini. She was sent off to Italy, and that was the end of the one gentle episode in his life.

## II

WHEN Mazarin died Louis was twenty-three. Having acquired, under the guidance of this Italian minister, a fondness for artistic expression, he now transformed all France into a museum of gardens, palaces, statues, paintings, chateaux and parks. An air of artificial grandeur pervaded the country. The royal court became a mosaic of painted and powdered and high-heeled ladies and gentlemen who ate and drank with delicate gestures, and who expressed the most inane ideas in the most elegant phrases. Encouraged by his mistresses he invited to his palace the best poets and playwrights and philosophers and scientists and soldiers and statesmen and painters and cooks, and he treated them all, as a good-natured master treats his pet dogs, with generous crumbs from his royal table. When he got sick of them, he cast them away from him like so much useless rubbish.

He treated his courtesans just as he treated his scholars and his artists. When his first mistress, Louise de la Vallière, had presented him with three children he packed her off to a convent and supplied himself with a new mistress, Madame de Montespan—a woman of high rank and low character. And when he had had enough of her he accused her of practising black magic upon his royal affections, and he sent her, too, packing. But the Montespan had a tongue whose keen and daring shafts not even the dignity of Louis XIV could ward off. As she retreated from his presence on the occasion of their parting quarrel, she fired the last shot. "Thank heaven," she said, "I no longer have to endure your offensive breath." How the



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

Sun King must have winced at this audacious reminder of his all-too-human imperfection!

The last of his mistresses, Madame de Maintenon, outlived his wife. Louis promised again and again that he would make her his new queen. But he remained faithful to the teachings of Mazarin: "Promise everything and do nothing." Toward the end of his life he married her in private, to be sure, but he made her merely his morganatic wife. He never raised her to his own royal level.

In addition to his "regular" mistresses Louis XIV had his kingly number of irregular liaisons. He often told his mother that he was ashamed of his unrestrained appetites. But he never did anything to restrain them. He built his palace at Versailles, with its famous hall of mirrors, for the entertainment of his courtesans. The banquets and the dances that he gave at Versailles and elsewhere surpassed in splendor even the debaucheries of the ancient Roman emperors. At some of these carousals his scabbard alone was, to quote an official document of the time, "so studded with diamonds that it was difficult to make out the gold in which they were set."

For all this pleasure and beauty, however, Louis XIV paid too great a price. He bought the splendor of France with the sufferings of its peasants. Diderot, one of the French prophets of a nobler world, conjures up a picture of the ghost of Louis XIV pointing out the beautiful palace of Versailles to the ghost of his grandfather, Henri IV. The old king looks at the palace and shakes his head:

"'You are right, my son, it is beautiful! But I should like to look at the houses of the peasants of Gonesse!'

"'What would he have thought had he known that in the country around these imposing palaces the peasants slept on straw and hadn't even a roof over their heads or bread in their mouths?'"

## LOUIS XIV

### III

AFTER the manner of dictators the world over Louis XIV had the voice of Jacob and the hand of Esau. He pretended that he was helping his people while in reality he was oppressing them. He told his subjects that he was their sole protector against the money power of the bankers. He arrested Fouquet, the representative of the banking interests, confiscated his goods and cut him off from all human contact in the most inaccessible of the French fortresses. And then he proclaimed that he had taken over the private gold of the bankers for the general use of the public. He had, of course, done nothing of the kind. He had merely transferred the money from the private banks into his private treasury, to be used at his own discretion for his own benefit. He had substituted one absolute plutocrat for a competitive system of plutocracy. As for his common citizens, he cared not a particle for any of them and he enriched not one of them by a single sou. He showed his "regard" for the common people by taxing them beyond the limit of their endurance. At first, to be sure, he tried to tax the nobles, as well as the workingmen and the peasants, in order to raise the funds for his extravagant entertainments. But when the nobles revolted he bribed them by throwing the entire tax burden upon the shoulders of the common people. In his public proclamations he expressed all sorts of hypocritical friendship for the poor. "Laborers," he said on one occasion, "are even more useful than soldiers." On another occasion, speaking of his subjects, he said, "I love them all." He "loved" them, and he did everything in his power to crush them. His extortions finally reduced the peasants "to eating grass like the beasts in the field."

He hadn't the slightest sympathy for other people. A king, he believed, should have no pity in his heart. He should rule his people as a master rules his slaves. He showed nothing but con-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

tempt for his subjects. He treated them like animals belonging to a lower world.

### IV

THE contempt in which he held others was but the negative phase of the esteem in which he held himself. He worshiped his own greatness. He honored himself as a divine creature, a god whose power was supreme not only in France but throughout Europe. He entered into a campaign of aggressive warfare against Spain and the Netherlands in order, as he pretended, to smash the money power of those states. The wars which Louis XIV unleashed lasted over forty years.

In order to befuddle his subjects into a warlike frenzy, he maintained a highly efficient bureau of propaganda. The public speakers exhorted the peasants to die for their king, since their king—so they said—was ready to die for them. Yet, so far as we know, Louis never exposed his skin to the bullets of the enemy. He was a conqueror at long range. Let the common people rot in the mire of the battlefields. The Sun King preferred to shine serenely among his mistresses at Versailles. "The glory of the prince," declared one of his propagandists, the famous Bossuet, "is the ornament of the state."

In addition to the propaganda at home the king hired some of the cleverest writers in the neutral countries "to think well of His Most Exalted Majesty (Louis XIV) and upon occasion to say as much." The king was an adept pupil of Machiavelli. He placed an equal trust in the iron of his bullets and the oil of his bribes. And the peasants had to pay for both.

Yet now and then a voice was raised in the wilderness against all this brutality and stupidity and fraud that went under the name of military glory. On the fifth of March 1675 Father Mascaron preached, in the presence of the entire court, an anti-militaristic sermon in which he defined a hero as a thief who

## LOUIS XIV

at the head of an army did what the ordinary thief found it necessary to do alone.

But King Louis paid no attention to the sermon. He continued his conquests until 1707. He gained a few extra patches of land for himself and killed off several millions of his people. The wars of Louis XIV are famous in history. They gave the world a number of regimental songs which are popular to this day, and they devastated several thousand villages which to this day have not been rebuilt.

## V

KING LOUIS considered himself a devout Christian. But in this he was mistaken. For the Prince of War had no clear conception of the teachings of the Prince of Peace. Every year, on Good Friday, Louis washed the feet of twelve paupers, and for the next three hundred and sixty-four days he allowed them to starve. He persecuted the Huguenots for entertaining a faith that was different from his own. He did this, he said, in order to establish national unity. What he actually succeeded in accomplishing as a result of this, as well as of his other suppressive acts, was to establish nationwide discontent.

He died on September 1, 1715, after a reign of seventy-two years. He had cultivated in himself a contempt for the common people, and he had produced in the common people a distaste for absolute monarchy which only two generations later resulted in the French Revolution.



# **FREDERICK THE GREAT**

*Important Dates in Life of Frederick the Great*

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|--|--|
| 1712—Born in Prussia.                                      | 1751—Completed new Prussian code.              |
| 1730—Attempted to run away from his father.                | 1752—Gave Voltaire royal welcome.              |
| 1731—Allowed again to wear his uniform.                    | 1756—Beginning of Seven Years' War.            |
| 1733—Married Elizabeth Christina, cousin of Maria Theresa. | 1764—Concluded treaty of alliance with Russia. |
| 1740—Became king at death of his father.                   | 1785—Formed a league of princes.               |
| 1741—Invaded Silesia.                                      | 1786—Died at Sans Souci, his palace.           |
| 1745—Won series of military victories.                     |  |

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# Frederick the Great

1712—1786

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**P**RUSSIA in the eighteenth century was only one of a number of insignificant states in the Holy Roman Empire. It lay to the north, an obscure little brat of a duchy whose governor up to a time shortly before our story commences hadn't even enjoyed the title of king. The dukes of the Hohenzollern family, who ruled the little state, were only too pleased to hold the basin of the Austrian emperor when he washed his hands at his ceremonial functions. They were merely the biggest fishes in a dumpy little political swamp. And when the swamp became a kingdom, and the duke assumed a crown, it was a master stroke of the Divine Director that Frederick William Hohenzollern should be cast in the role of the second reigning monarch. His father, who had been the first to don the purple through some petty political deal, was a pompous little Hohenzollern who almost burst his gaiters with pride at the great honor and privilege bestowed upon him. His son was forever apologizing for the extravagance of his father. He thought it outrageous that this bold man should make plans for an elaborate funeral when it meant throwing money away to the



## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

worms. The son was amazingly circumspect. From the age of eight he had hidden away all the loose coins he had managed to put his hands upon and tabulated them in a book entitled *An Account of My Ducats*. When he ascended the throne he immediately discharged two thirds of the servants, canceled two thirds of the court expenses, substituted wooden chairs for the lavish couches and lounges and passed an order that thenceforth all courtiers must put aside their sumptuous powdered wigs and don modest little pigtails. His councillors and friends shivered in the cold when he began to stint on logs for the fireplace, and even his wife rebelled when he counted the candles and swore that he would rather have darkness than waste an unnecessary gulden. "*Schweinhunde*," all those who spent their money. "*Schweinhunde!*"

Though he wasn't lavish by nature, nature was lavish by him. She built him close to the ground with a torso as round as the full moon, a beer-barrel neck and cheeks of cherry red. She gave him a tongue that was fertile with gustful oaths and a personality full of liver and bile. He walked through his kingdom of three million souls with a sharp lookout for any idleness. If he met one of his subjects loitering on the street he set on him with his cane and gave him a sound thrashing "for God and country." Tubby little Hohenzollern! He ruled his empire with a cane, attended to the stable horses in person, knocked the teeth out of his diligent councillors for offering advice he didn't fancy, drank beer until he grew purple in the face and pulled the ears of anyone who dared to read French literature or to speak the French language. He hated the French, called them fops and sneered at their grand parlor manners. "*Schweinhunde!* I am a German prince. What do I want with *them!*"

He allowed himself but a single luxury—that was to build and maintain an army. All his miserliness, all his skimping, all his saving was to the end that he might get together a bigger and better army of soldiers. Tears came to his eyes when he

## FREDERICK THE GREAT

thought of his beloved Potsdam guard—the palace grenadiers known throughout Europe for their great physical stature. Not one of these men was under six feet. They were his tin soldiers, his beloved playthings, the absorbing passion of his life. He sent agents all over Europe to bring home the tallest men they could find. No wonder he had no time for sumptuous meals, or velvet lounges, or lavish entertainments at the court. All his waking hours were consumed in the drilling of his regiments at the Schlossplatz. Back and forth they marched—one two, one two, one two, to the lively beat of the solid little drillmaster at their head. It was a standing joke throughout Europe that although Frederick drilled his soldiers so assiduously, he never once used them in battle during the entire twenty-six years of his reign. No matter. They were his dress soldiers on parade, his mock opera troops who pounded the gravel from sunrise to sunset for an exuberant one-man audience. *Schöne, lange Soldaten!* They were his sole ambition, the very center of his dreams. Left, right, left, right. And then, in answer to the command, "*Heraus, heraus!*" a huge bear would emerge from the sidelines, slink into the front rank and march on his hind legs with his fellow privates up and down the Schlossplatz.

"And someday, if I could have a giant bigger than all the rest . . ." Frederick murmured with a dreamy look in his eyes. But his wife was bound to disappoint him. She was no fit match for this hard-drinking little drillmaster. She detested the bare chairs, the simple food, the counting of candles. She was delicate and genteel and unused to the loud Prussian oaths. When she presented Frederick William with a son it was a puny little creature instead of the mighty giant he had dreamt about. "*Mein Gott,*" he muttered when he first set eyes on him. "So this is the heir to the throne of Prussia!"

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

### II

THE BOY, as he grew older, adopted the habits of a dandy. He learned to play the flute (woe betide him if his father should ever discover such an instrument of effeminacy in his house!), and he spent his days in a dressing gown, reading French history, philosophy and literature. He wasn't the least bit carried away by the sight of a uniform. He hated military drill. He hated to memorize all the little details about the military history of the Hohenzollerns, although his father had commanded the tutor to stuff every bit of it into his unwilling head. "Wouldn't it be better," wrote the tutor to the king, "if instead of having to study the whole of this lengthy work, His Royal Highness were simply required to learn the more important events which I could gather into a synopsis for him?" On the margin of this letter the king replied, "He must learn *all* the events."

The youngster proved to be a problem child. He never got up on time in the morning. He wasn't concerned about his personal appearance. He hadn't the slightest conception about discipline. All this exasperated his father, who drew up a budget of time for his recalcitrant son, stipulating how each hour of the day must be spent. "While getting combed and queued, you must at the same time be eating your breakfast, so that both jobs will be ended by half-past six. . . . Do not loiter in bed when called, but get up immediately. . . . After you have said your prayers, you must put on your shoes and stockings as rapidly as possible and also wash your hands and face—but not with soap." (That was too expensive a luxury.)

The young man detested his father for his disciplinary measures. He wished to be left alone in his indolence. In secret, after the day's work was done, he took out his flute and played music to his heart's content. He persisted in reading books from the grand salons of France. He became acquainted with the writings of Voltaire. He longed to leave the bleak kingdom of Prussia for

## FREDERICK THE GREAT

the mellow charms of Versailles. At an early age, too, he became interested in Latin. When his father learned that Latin had been added to his curriculum, he called his tutor on the carpet, caned him and told him to teach the young man something that could be put to more practical use.

“*Ach, that son of mine, that traitor! If I ever see him reading Latin or French again . . . I am a Prussian prince. Ich spreche Deutsch, und mein Sohn soll immer Deutsch sprechen!*”

At first he was puzzled that such a son should have been born to him. Often, as he drilled his soldiers or went on a boar hunt—a favorite sport with him—he turned over in his mind the best way to thwart the outrageous bias of his son for things French. Those French—all fops. They walked like dancing teachers on their toes. They were good for nothing! As for their elegant dress and manners—bah, they had vermin in their wigs. To think that a son of his—!

“He is stubborn and wicked and does not love his father,” complained Frederick William to his friends. “He knows that I cannot abide an effeminate person who has a shifty eye, who cannot ride or shoot, who does not wash himself properly and who wears his hair like a coxcomb. I have spoken to him about all this a thousand times, in vain. He never improves.” What had he done to deserve such a son—he who was content to sit on hard wooden chairs and who marched his giants up and down the Schlossplatz every day!

The son wrote the father a little note after an unusually stormy scene. “I beg my dear papa to be gracious to me. I hope that my dear papa will get over that cruel hate of which I have been made sufficiently aware by all his actions; otherwise I could no longer bear it.”

By the time he was eighteen the son had formulated a plan to run away from the palace at the earliest opportunity; to leave the country and to seek refuge somewhere, anywhere out of range of this martinet drill sergeant father of his. He sat

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

silently at his meals; ducked the dinner plates hurled at him by his father; pursued in the solitude of his bedchamber his study of philosophy, which his father called "wind manufacture," and laid plans with a group of friends, young officers in his father's army, to run away to England. At night a hurried visit to his mother, a kiss, a whispered consultation as he told her of his plans. Then, a brief good-by to his sister Wilhelmine. The following day he was ordered to accompany his father on a tour of Prussia. They reached Stuttgart where they prepared to spend the night. A carriage appeared silently at the gate. Frederick stole out of his room. His loyal friend, his beloved Katte, should now be waiting for him as agreed. Good old Katte. A comrade of his from early childhood. But where is he? Why isn't he at the appointed place? Ah well, he must have been detained. He will surely meet him at The Hague. . . .

But Frederick's carriage is stopped by the sentries at Frankfurt. Another carriage draws up alongside of Frederick's. Out steps the king. He bows mockingly to his son. "What, you still here?" he asks in a grand, irritating tone of pretended surprise. "I thought you were long ago in Paris."

How did the king learn of his plan to escape? Spies? . . . Frederick decides to brave it out. "Had I wanted to, sire," he replies boldly, "I should have been in Paris long ago."

But the king is in no mood for defiance on the part of his son. "Do you realize what this little prank of yours means? You have attempted to leave my kingdom. You are a deserter. You have tried to reach England—the political antagonist of our country. You are a traitor. A traitor!" Suddenly his voice grows loud and terrible. He lifts his cane to strike. The group of attendants around them shudder, knowing full well what to expect. Frederick stands unflinchingly. He takes the blow, as he has taken many similar blows, with calm indifference. The father shouts and shakes his fist in the face of the young man. "Confess the whole plot—every last detail of it! Confess, blast you,



*Frederick the Great*



*Toussaint L'Ouverture*

## FREDERICK THE GREAT

or——” He draws his sword from its scabbard. He advances a step with murder in his eye. An old officer throws himself between the father and the son. “Kill me instead, sire,” he implores. “Remember, sire, he is the heir to the throne of Prussia.”

Frederick William hesitates and sheathes his sword. Then he turns to an aide. “Lock him up in the tower at Kustrin. He is the state’s prisoner.” As he turns to walk away, he adds, “By your life, do not let him escape.”

It was done as the king had ordered. The young man was inclined to consider the incident with a grim sense of humor. So these were the lengths to which his father had been prepared to go in order to stop him. Well, he was used to such scenes. But the old devil *did* exaggerate when he called him a traitor. Ah well, the old man would get over his rage. In the meantime Frederick rather fancied the idea of being locked up in this quaint town of Kustrin. He would live his life—confined, to be sure, but his *own* life—many miles away from his father at Berlin. He had brought a flute with him, and books. . . . He wondered whether the king had found out any of the details of the plot. It would go hard with poor Katte, if Frederick William knew that he had been an accomplice. The young fellow would most certainly lose his command in the army. The prince royal shuddered. And all because he had imposed upon Katte’s good nature to help him. The whole plot had been his own inspiration from the start. He thought it would be such tremendous fun to run away with Katte under cover of the night. Better than any romance he had ever read. That would be adventure—that would be living. What sport he and Katte had had talking it over, laying the secret plans. Why, they would become the sensation of Europe. . . .

And then as the young prince sat idly playing the flute and losing himself in dreams came the sudden shock—the terrible catastrophe. He put aside his flute and rushed to the window of his prison. The king had learned about Katte. The military



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court had found him guilty of conspiracy in aiding and abetting a treachery against the country which he had sworn as a soldier to serve. . . . The king gave orders that he be beheaded. They marched him by the window in full view of the other traitor, the recalcitrant Frederick. . . .

“No, no, my father is joking—it’s his way of frightening you,” cried the prince, blinded with tears. His father had a grim sense of humor. The prince ceased crying and laughed. So this was how he was going to punish them for their mischief—by frightening them within an inch of their lives so that they would never forget. Katte looked up at him and smiled as he was being led away. “Good-by, Your Highness,” he called cheerfully. In a few minutes he was dead. The prince royal stumbled back to where his books lay, and his flute. He got upon his knees. There was a knock at the door. An attendant entered and gave him news from the palace at Berlin. The king had ordered that he stand before the court-martial on trial for his life.

### III

FREDERICK did not die. The court at Berlin declared that it had no competency to try a crown prince of Prussia for his life. Orders were given for his release from prison. But he was confined to the town, living in a simple house as a private citizen, working for his livelihood like any other subject of the king. He was dismissed from the military rank which had been his by birth. The king ordered the soldiers to refrain from saluting him. He must work as a clerk and send to his father a monthly account of all his expenditures. He was not allowed to leave the gates of the town. He must take his meals alone.

Frederick meekly complied with these commands. He wrote letters to his “Dear Papa” fortnightly, each time apologizing for his grave misdemeanor. He begged permission to return to Berlin and his father’s palace. To which entreaty old Frederick

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William replied, "If I had done what you have done I would be ashamed to let anyone see my face."

A gradual change took place in the young lad. Much of his early tenderness left him, and much of his youthful blitheness. The death of his friend Katte had been a tremendous shock to his delicate moral constitution. Hitherto he had solved all the problems of his own little world by piping a few notes on the flute. But of a sudden his entire dreamworld toppled on its foundations. As he sat alone at his meals, or walked the streets of the half deserted little village at night, he pondered the terrifying experiences that had of late thrust themselves out of the new realism into his own acute consciousness. At twenty he had been hailed as a traitor and confronted with the imminent probability of death. His boyhood had been broken swiftly and at one sure blow into little fragments. He dug his nails into his flesh as he lay awake nights on his cot—staring at the low ceiling. One thing was certain. It kept shouting itself into his inner ear until it reached the very depths of his being. It was a practical credo that had helped him to bear up under the great grief at the loss of his friend—a credo that he was to carry with him henceforth to the end of his life. "In this world of ours, one must love nothing too much."

## IV

IN 1740 the beer-barreled, apple-checked little drill sergeant of a king went to his reward. During the last few years of his life there had been a substantial reconciliation between father and son, and the dying words of the martinet addressed to the sallow-faced young man had been words of a glowing tribute. "I die content," the old man had whispered, "knowing at last that I am leaving behind me such a worthy son and successor." The son pressed his lips tightly together, as if he wished to restrain the words that had sprung to his mind. Old Frederick

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William had performed his disciplinary duties well. He had been bent upon creating a Titan, and he had succeeded at last. He had crushed the sniveling spirit that had called itself his son, and in its place he had fashioned a real man—not a six-footer outwardly, to be sure (Frederick was rather below the average height), but a man of gigantic stature within.

The new king of Prussia was twenty-four, hard-bitten and cynical. As soon as he came upon the throne he put an end to his father's habit of recruiting tall men for his guard and encouraging marriages between those of his subjects who had large bodies and who would therefore be likely to propagate hearty physical specimens for the future army of Prussia. "From what I know," said Frederick sardonically, "Alexander was not tall, nor Caesar."

People all over Europe were now casting their eyes upon Prussia to discover how this new king would act. It was well known that Frederick was a scholar. His delight in the French classics and the ancient systems of philosophy and his fondness for poetry and music had spread on the wings of gossip to the various courts. It was known, moreover, that he was an ardent worshiper of the French satirist, Voltaire, the man with the flaming tongue and the stinging pen. Here was a new phenomenon in statesmanship—a philosopher king, the type of ruler that the builders of Utopia had dreamed about. Here was a monarch who could bring justice and wisdom and temperance to his kingdom. Here was an ideal man for the proper experiment—a man of thought born of the royal blood. Here was the dream that Plato had envisaged when he wrote of his republic, a land governed by an aristocracy of intellect according to the laws of reason. Here was the perfect king about to build the perfect state. The eyes of the world were focused upon King Frederick of Prussia.

At his accession Voltaire had sent him a letter congratulating him on the great event. "I am happy to know," he wrote, "that

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there is in the world a prince who can think like a man." To this noble tribute Frederick replied: "Yes. And for God's sake, write to me as a man and, like myself, learn to despise titles, names and all exterior pomp."

On another occasion he clarified his ideas on religion in the perfect state. "In my kingdom of Prussia everyone may go to heaven in his own way."

But even as he declared this the ghost of his father left its grave and rose before him. The dream of his youth was utterly gone—those days when he refused to drill in the Schlossplatz and cast away the soldier's uniform: "In this world of ours, one must love nothing too much."

The giant had been created out of the wounded innocence of the boy. Katte! Katte! But Katte was no longer here. The sole object of his love was dead and buried. "And if we cannot love, we must hate. . . ." He increased the Prussian army to a hundred thousand men, almost double the number his father had commanded, and he hurled them with brutal suddenness into a little strip of Austrian territory called Silesia. He snatched it away from the young queen of twenty-three who had just ascended the Austrian throne

## V

THE TECHNIQUE of the Austrian invasion was similar in some respects to that of the European invasions at the present day. The Prussian soldiers distributed handbills to the Silesians stating that they had come not as foes but as friends—to chastise them for their misdeeds. Europe was stunned. Not that the other monarchs were above robbing the young queen, Maria Theresa, of her territory. European diplomacy in the eighteenth century was no more civilized than European diplomacy in the twentieth century. What amazed the other potentates, however, was the energy with which the scholarly young poet had executed this military coup. The energy and the cynical brutality.

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As for Frederick himself, he was delighted with his success. He had caught the Austrian army off guard. It had been stationed many miles from Silesia and hadn't even been able to put up a fight. "The whole conquest," declared Frederick, "has cost me only two officers and twenty men."

But Silesia had valuable minerals, and the Austrians were not prepared to let it go without an attempt to recover it. And so, after watching the Prussians dig in for the winter, the picked troops of Maria Theresa, the finest in all Europe, attacked the army of Frederick in the spring. At the sound of the cannon and the smoke of the combat the heart of the young Prussian conqueror froze for a time within him. He saw from a hill his infantry break at the relentless Austrian advance. He saw them retreat in disorder. The terror of his childhood gripped him—the old distaste for the military adventure and the sight of the dead and the wounded bodies massed in the mud. He turned away, mounted his horse and fled into the night, blindly, desperately. He passed the night at an inn, incognito, with pale face and terrible memories. The following morning word came to him that the Prussian cavalry had turned the disgraceful defeat into a glorious victory. It was the last time he ever fled from the field.

He could now have retired his army and given his country peace. He could have started building that city of his dreams, leaving the petty quarrels of Europe to the other kings. But the tramp of the conquering armies lured him. He was the son of his father, after all. The scholar had degenerated into the soldier. Another battle with the Austrians, another victory. "Who could have imagined," he wrote joyously, "that Providence would select a poet to overthrow the political systems of Europe?"

A poet, indeed. A man with a superior imagination. But an imagination steeped in blood. He was destined to create a stupendous and terrible epic—an epic of conquest and brutality and hatred and suffering and death.

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His old friends were shocked at the change in his character. Formerly he had jested out of sympathy and kindness. Now, when he laughed, it was to taunt and wound. His face had grown dark and cruel. There was a smoldering fire in his eye. His mouth was thinner, more tightly compressed than ever. He lived on his horse incessantly. His boots were smeared with the mud of the drill ground. His coat was stained with snuff. His three-cornered hat, which he never took off even when he slept, was faded into a dirty gray. His cheeks were lined and depressed like that of a bony man in his fifties. He was, however, not quite thirty. "At the slightest contradiction his face became terrible to see."

He had plunged into the maelstrom of war. "I would as soon part with my petticoats as part with Silesia," the Austrian queen had declared to her ministers. Frederick determined to strike quickly at Vienna and to put an end to the Austrian plan for revenge. But first the city of Prague in Bohemia must be taken. It was the passkey to the capital of Austria. Frederick sent two armies to converge on Prague. He led one himself. The cold winter caught him in Bohemia as he was laying siege to Prague. The severe weather nipped his army. His food communications were wrecked. The soldiers froze and starved. But the philosopher king stubbornly urged them on. There were dark mutterings in the ranks. Men deserted from the army. The Prussian generals told their king that it would be suicide to stay another week in Bohemia. Frederick gave the order for retreat.

But his is a restless life. There is a demon driving him on. There will be another spring. Another tremendous battle with the Austrians. Frederick gallops through the field after he has won the day at Hohenfriedeberg. He smiles with satisfaction at the number of Austrian corpses strewn along the way. Weeks of plots and counterplots between France, the ally of Prussia, and England, the confederate of Austria. Intrigues, parleys,

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lies, and the common people on all the fronts fall before the cannon. But the scholar is not yet completely dead in the soldier. Occasionally Frederick still finds time to think of other matters besides intrigue and murder. After a retreat he writes home to his minister from his camp quarters: "I have lost everything. Be so good as to buy me a Boileau—the handsome octavo volume with the notes. Also, Bossuet's *Introduction to Universal History* and Cicero's *Tusculan Questions*. . . ." At this moment, thirty thousand of his fellow countrymen lay mangled on the field.

Five years of these mass killings, treaties made in bad faith and broken, diplomatic maneuvering, treachery and deceit. Though a young man in his early thirties, he is completely worn out with the strife. He is no ordinary soldier. A period of reflection and regret seizes him. The philosopher once more raises his head. "What are we, poor human atoms, to get up projects that cost so much blood!" The thin lines of the mouth lose their severity. He walks through his smiling vineyards, deep in thought. There, where the soil is richest, he has built himself a tomb to house his body when the cares of war and the problems of philosophy are at an end. Directly opposite the tomb he has ordered his workmen to construct another house—a house not for death, but for living—with an extensive library and terraces and dens for study. "When I am here," he tells a friend, "I shall at last be free from care." And indeed he named this house "Carefree," or in the French tongue he loved so well, "Sans Souci."

## VI

PEACE. Leisure to reflect on life and to estimate and weigh its values in the quiet calm of scholarship and in the company of poets. He invited Voltaire to live with him and to nourish him with his wit. The thin, sardonic Frenchman, because of his wicked jesting about the state, had been at odds with the mon-

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arch and with the nobility of France. As a matter of fact, he had been living for years in exile with a mistress who had spurred him on to noble writing and ignoble loving. But a younger lover had stepped upon the scene, and the liaison between the philosopher and the lady had become more and more mental and less and less physical. Still they were close. She gave her charms to the young gallant and her inspiration to the aging man of letters. But then she died suddenly. The old cynic broke down in grief. And now, bereft of his mistress and his country, Voltaire lent an ear to the pleadings of the king of Prussia who for many years had offered the hospitality of his palace to him. Voltaire accepted the invitation and left the grave of his mistress for the table of Frederick. For years the young ruler had idolized the writings of the older Frenchman. The meeting between the philosopher king and the king of philosophers is memorable. Their future relationship is amazing. Voltaire is given a pension, room and board free, carriages to ride in, the Star of the Order of the Merit. His duties are to amuse the king with his table conversation, the like of which has never been heard in Prussia; to correct the poems and the dramas of the king, who fancies himself quite a literary man; to guide the intellectual aristocracy at the Prussian court, and to trumpet the name of Frederick, as only Voltaire can do it, from the roof tops. By a single word, a single stroke of the pen, the skin-and-bones little essayist, dramatist and philosopher extraordinary can lift a name into immortal glory or condemn it to eternal ruin. His genius for satire and cynical comment, his pitiless reason, his pithy, limpid, eloquent style are proverbial. He is the Spirit of Laughter clothed in human flesh.

Yet, for all that, his laughing tongue alone is immortal. His other bodily parts are racked with age. He gets easily chilled in the bones. He shakes with the ague. After a few nights at the palace he complains to Frederick that the servants haven't given him enough candles to light his room. He grum-



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bles at the poor coffee he is served, the insufficiency of the butter, the skiminess of the sugar. Frederick jokes with him and tells him he is amazed that such a great man should worry himself over such little trifles. And thus, surrounded by a goodly company, they sit at their evening meal and hurl their wits at one another. Voltaire alone is a match for the king. Before his arrival no one could withstand the thrusts of Frederick's tongue. Frederick is enchanted with the little French philosopher, and yet he feels uneasy in his company. He doesn't fancy the perpetual twinkle in Voltaire's eye at every pompous declaration of royalty. He feels that the Frenchman is secretly mocking him. If Frederick has put terror into the crowned heads of Europe with his sword, Voltaire has struck terror into their hearts with his pen. His humor has the sting of brimstone. He is the devil's own disciple. What does he care about a mere king?

He writes a letter to a friend in Paris and declares that he is composing this letter "accompanied by the sound of drums, of trumpets and of incessant reports of firearms which deafen my pacific ears. It is good only for Frederick the Great. He requires his armies of a morning, and Apollo in the afternoon. . . . He forms battalions and composes rhymes." But when Frederick brought him his poetry to revise, Voltaire muttered to himself, "Will he never get tired of sending me his dirty linen to wash?" Never forgetting that he was first and last a Frenchman, he dabbled in politics and attempted to influence Frederick into joining the armies of Louis XV in their struggle with the British sea power. Frederick resented this presumptuousness on Voltaire's part. Voltaire ought to stick to his literary labors and keep his nose out of matters that pertained only to kings. "The gentleman in ordinary to Louis XV will give way, if you please, to the great poet," he sharply rebuked Voltaire. The quarrel between the philosopher and the king smoldered for many months. There was, after all, no real refuge in Prussia for a man of thought. And so the uncrowned emperor of the

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intellect shook hands with the little king of Prussia as he was reviewing his soldiers on the Potsdam parade field.

“Good-by, Your Majesty.”

“Farewell, Your Deviltry.”

And Voltaire left Prussia never to return.

## VII

PRUSSIA was no utopia, and Frederick no real philosopher king. The older he got the stronger grew his contempt for mankind. “Come on, you blackguards, do you want to live forever?” he shouted at his soldiers as he plunged them again into the maelstrom of war. The rulers of Europe were amazed and terrified at the Prussian king. Austria discarded her age-old prejudice against France and formed an alliance with her. Bavaria and Russia joined them. Prussia’s only ally, England, was too busy fighting against her rivals in America and in India to give Prussia any help in terms of man power, though she sent Frederick a yearly pension with which to support his army and to protect the British duchy of Hanover. The rulers of Europe were out for blood. They would put an end to this upstart Frederick. They would carve up Prussia into little pieces so that it could never rise again. But Frederick defied them all. He was everywhere at once. Outnumbered by more than two to one, he made quick cavalry dashes, unexpected forced marches and lightning thrusts and completely revolutionized the art of European warfare. He offset the disadvantage of small numbers by hurling his men diagonally across the enemy’s front and attacking a specific point without exposing his own flank. He trained his cavalry to move swiftly in large compact masses and thus enveloped the heavy, foot-slow infantry of the French and the Austrians. “Live and let live,” he wrote hypocritically in his letters to the palace. But woe to any Prussian who broke ground before the enemy charge! He suffered terrible defeats. He court-

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martialed his generals. On one occasion he lost half his army; on another, the greater bulk of his staff officers. He felt relieved at this loss of his officers. It lessened the danger of an army plot against him.

The Prussians wanted to go home to their fields and to resume a normal, peaceful life. "The Prussians can say as they like. I *do* as I like," boasted the philosopher king. The combined population of the enemy numbered a hundred million; the population of Prussia was scarcely five. On top of all this, Sweden was preparing to join Austria and France and to invade Prussia from the north. Frederick was a lion at bay. The French, a hundred thousand strong, crossed the Rhine. The Austrians hurled him back at Kollin. Almost an entire generation of Prussians are left lying in the mud. Frederick plans to commit suicide. He receives a letter from his old friend, that other philosopher, who is so different and so much greater a man. In this letter Voltaire tries to console the younger man whose board he has once shared, whose eyes once used to light up with worship at his presence. And one time they quarreled violently—but that seems so long ago. Voltaire is over eighty and ready for his end. One more word of advice to his young disciple, one more whisper to a philosopher and a friend. He appeals to the Prussian king, not as the veteran of a hundred battlefields, but as his pupil and comrade in the guild of good fellowship among men. Has the king suffered a horrible military defeat? What of it? Is he threatened with the loss of his kingdom? What of it? Ah, Frederick, "a man who is only a king may think himself very unfortunate when he has lost his dominions, but a king who is also a philosopher should be able to do without his lands." So wrote Voltaire. How ridiculous to worry over the petty problems of kings when you and I are men! Come, I will show you the road to peace through infinite wisdom. . . .

But Voltaire's is a dying voice melting away into the ages. And it becomes lost in the clamor of the war trumpet and the

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explosion of the musket. The master is gone; the disciple sits upon his horse and directs his cavalry charges against the French, the Austrians, the Swedes. He gains victory after victory, but his nation suffers defeat after defeat. The population is decimated. Misery has spread its wings everywhere. The very civilization of Europe is threatened. But Frederick must have his victories—sits in the saddle—drives his men—loses a quarter of a million soldiers—loses his closest friend among the generals. All the old-timers lie buried in obscure graves; most of the young men, too. . . . Who is there left to be his companion, to amuse him at his table wassails after this Seven Years' War?

But Frederick's hunger for war is not yet stilled. More campaigns, more battles. Always he sits upon his horse, even though his legs are growing old and rickety, even though two horses have been shot under him in a single skirmish. He sits in the din of the battle and listens to the cries of the dying men—music to his ears. Something grotesque but altogether satisfying about the dying and the dead. His fellow monarchs and the future historians will call him Frederick the Great! He takes out his snuffbox as his cavalry sweeps by on the attack. It is crushed by a stray bullet. His clothes are riddled by a hail of shrapnel. He grumbles sardonically, "Is there no bullet that can reach me?" For surely he would like to die. Peace—eternal peace after the thunder of the charge—that is what he is after, the tomb in the fertile vineyards by the palace of Sans Souci. Voltaire is already home in the blessed land—reading, no doubt, new pages of wisdom in the libraries of Paradise, sitting at the supper table of the gods and outjesting everyone present. And see, there is an empty chair for him, Frederick, directly across the plate of the old French philosopher. Voltaire has been saving his best insults to hurl at him when he arrives. . . .

Another charge of the infantry, a scramble for the enemy's battery, a final victory. And then, a truce. The ephemeral truce of the little world below, signed by the rulers of England,

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France, Austria, Russia. England has driven the French out of North America and swept clean the seven seas. And there is a little glory for Frederick. But no real peace.

His crafty eye squints at a morsel of Poland that would look good under his banner. He strikes a bargain with the rulers of Russia and of Austria—two women not averse to land-grabbing. They seize Poland and partition it among themselves. Frederick receives a hearty slice. More tasty data for the history books. Still no real peace. A dirty little man close to sixty, the same old cocked hat trimmed with the soiled feather, coat filthy with sneezing, trousers stained with snuff, eyes mean, cheeks pinched—a supreme egotist who fancied himself an authority on everything. His stomach was bloated with cramps. It seemed as if a mere puff of wind would blow this wreckage away. . . .

In all the European courts they called him another Caesar, the greatest soldier of his age! What, this small, old, wizened little creature the terror of all the armies in Europe? This childless celibate who, impotent at twenty-three, had never been able to endure the caresses of a woman? His body as worn out as his clothes—lousy, foul smelling, his cheeks dabbed with rouge to hide the cake of dirt? Pah, keep away from this walking corpse—this putrid package of decaying flesh!

Years ago, when he was young and had real dreams . . . Then he didn't rot astride a horse. . . . Then he had been alive with tenderness. And those terrifying nights he had spent as his father's prisoner at Kustrin, when he had first learned to suffer . . . And he had suffered always since. "Weary . . . of dwelling in a body worn out and condemned to suffer . . ." Soon his lips became gouty, his fingers swollen so that he could no longer play his flute. Then one day he was unable to hoist his tired body into the saddle. He sat in his tent in the training field at Potsdam, where the soldiers were going through their summer maneuvers. At night he blinked with terror into the darkness, for fear he would suffocate from his coughing. And one night,

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no different from any other in most respects, he groaned for help. A husky young soldier set the outworn little body on his knee and spanked it on the back to give it breath. He held Frederick tightly in his arms so that the king wouldn't crumple like an empty sack. For two hours the soldier held him silently—not a word was whispered. And the soul of the little old man stole quietly away.



# TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE



*Important Dates in Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*

1743—Born at Haiti.

1791—Joined insurrection of slaves.

1795—Appointed Brigadier-General.

1797—Appointed General-in-Chief.

1801—Became President of Republic of Haiti.

1803—Captured by the French and died a prisoner in the Fortress of Joux.

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# Toussaint L'Ouverture

1743—1803

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**T**HE son of a black slave, and himself a slave for almost fifty years, Toussaint L'Ouverture achieved immortality among the few supreme men of history. Lamartine wrote a drama about him. Harriet Martineau made him the hero of a novel. Whittier and Wordsworth honored him in their poetry. Auguste Comte placed him on a par with Plato and Buddha and Charlemagne. And Wendell Phillips devoted to him a panegyric of impassioned eloquence. "I would call him Cromwell," declared Phillips, "but Cromwell was only a soldier . . . I would call him Washington, but Washington held slaves . . . You think me a fanatic to-night, for you read history not with your eyes but with your prejudices. But fifty years hence, when truth gets a hearing, the muse of history will put Phocion for the Greek and Brutus for the Roman, Hampden for England, Fayette for France, choose Washington as the bright consummate flower of our earlier civilization and John Brown the ripe fruit of our noonday; then dipping her pen in the sunlight will write in the clear blue above them all the name of the soldier, the statesman, the martyr, Toussaint L'Ouverture."

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Who was this man who inflamed so much enthusiasm in so many an inspired heart?

### II

FRANÇOIS DOMINIQUE TOUSSAINT was the son of Gaou Guinou, a Negro kidnaped in Africa and sold into slavery at San Domingo. In his lean and hungry childhood—he was so delicate that they nicknamed him *skinny stick*—he heard many stories about his father's tribesmen in the freedom of the African forests, their capture by the "white hunters" from across the sea, their imprisonment in the "floating hells" that took them to the new world, and their inhuman treatment at the hands of their masters on the Haiti plantations. "When they took us to the slave ship," his father told him, "they chained us like animals. Then they packed us between decks so we couldn't even stand up. They laid us together side by side like a row of spoons. Many of us died from the bad air, and the rest of us envied them."

"Why did you envy them?"

"Because we knew what was waiting for us at the end of the trip."

"Tell me about it."

"First of all, they branded us like cattle with the master's initial. And then they flogged us and starved us and kicked us about as if we had no feelings. Myself, I was lucky, for I got a good master. But I've heard stories about the other slaves that would make your blood boil."

"Tell me."

"On one of the plantations the lady didn't like the dinner prepared by her black cook. So she ordered him to be thrown into the glowing oven."

"Did he get killed?"

"Not right away. He died a few days later from the burns."

"Was the lady a convert to Lord Jesus, like us?"

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"No, child. She was not a convert. She was born a Christian."

"This is terrible!"

"Yes. But sometimes the white folks' temper is not so quick. And then they just spit in the mouths of the black slaves, or stick a needle through their tongues, or knock out their teeth, or starve them to death when they're too old to work."

"But doesn't the law do anything about it?"

"No, child. The law in Haiti is for the white folks, not for the black."

Toussaint heard these and similar stories again and again. Once a newly-purchased slave from another plantation told them the story of a black man who was burned at the stake for having run away from his master. Just before the execution, a priest tried to convert him to Christianity. "If you enter into the faith, my son, you will be admitted into all the joys of Paradise."

"Are there any white folk in Paradise?"

"Of course."

"Then I'd rather die a heathen."

These stories sank into the mind of Toussaint, and made him think. They formed the bulk of his education. His knowledge of reading and writing was superficial. But his understanding of human nature was superb. As he grew up, he learned more and more about the cynical brutality of the masters and the smoldering resentment of the slaves.

But above all, he kept a level head. "Not all the masters are bad, and not all the slaves are good. It's the idea of slavery that's wrong. And some day I'm going to stop this."

"You, Toussaint?" His father shook his head sadly. "This slavery has been going on for over two hundred years. There's been many a black Moses who tried to deliver us from bondage. But all they ever got was death in the burning bush."

"Say what you like, father. Some day I'm going to stop this!"

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

### III

THE skinny child had grown into a sturdy youth. His duties as shepherd and later as coachman to his master, Count de Noé, gave him plenty of exercise in the open fields. And plenty of time to think. "The youngster," observed the count, "has an uncanny sympathy for animals and men. And," as he once saw him thrashing another young slave for kicking a dog, "a towering passion for justice."

His master, a man of kindly disposition, encouraged Toussaint to pick up a smattering of book knowledge, as well as a knowledge of medicinal herbs—an accomplishment possessed by perhaps one out of a thousand slaves. "It will be a good thing for my blacks," declared de Noé, "to have their own teacher and doctor." And without knowing it, de Noé was also preparing for his blacks a man to be their own savior.

At twenty-five he married—strange procedure for a Haitian slave—and adopted an illegitimate son that his wife brought him as a wedding present. The whites looked upon him with a sort of contemptuous respect—"who would have thought a nigger could be so human?"—and the blacks literally idolized him—"there's something mighty magical about that man."

A very homely and, it appeared, humble sort of magician. Short, wiry, swift as a greyhound but awkward as an ox, he had the flattened nose, the protruding jaw and the prominent lips of his African ancestors, and the ox-like, subservient eyes of the man accustomed to taking orders. Yet there were moments when those eyes flashed with a terrible fervor. "The fire of the Lord is in that look of Toussaint L'Ouverture."

He assumed the name *L'Ouverture* after he had read a book by the Abbé Raynal—*Histoire Philosophique des deux Indes*. It was a call for the slaves to assert themselves. "Nations of the world," wrote the Abbé, "your slaves are not in need of your generosity or of your councils, in order to break the sacrilegious

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yoke which oppresses them. The Negroes lack but a chief. Where is the great man? He will appear—we have no doubt of it. He will show himself; he will unfurl the sacred standard of liberty . . . More impetuous than the torrents, the companions of his misfortune will gather around him and leave everywhere the indelible traces of their just resentment. The whole world will join in applause with the name of the hero, who shall have established the rights of humanity. Everywhere the people will set up trophies to his glory.”

Toussaint read these words with a quickening of the pulse. Some day, please God, *he* would be that man. The slave François Toussaint would become the instrument of the Lord—*L'Ouverture*, the *Opener* of the door to Freedom for all his fellow slaves.

It was not until years later, however, that he adopted *L'Ouverture* as his official name. The hour for his crusade of liberation had not as yet arrived.

### IV

RUMBLINGS of the drums of freedom. Revolution in America. Capture of the Bastille. The white men were bestirring themselves throughout the world. Time for the black men, too, to cast off their chains.

But the white masters of San Domingo—the part of Haiti that belonged to France—were not willing to set their slaves free. Their hearts and their purses were on the side of the royalists, the landlords, the owners, the oppressors of the world. The National Assembly in Paris had written into the new constitution a clause to the effect that “all men are born and continue free and equal as to their rights.” But when the mulatto Vincent Ogé attempted to assert these “legal rights” in Haiti, he was arrested and broken alive on the wheel. His head was then cut off and set up for display on the crossroads as a warning to his “fellow niggers.”

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The Negroes reacted to this warning—but in a manner hardly anticipated by their masters. On the night of August 14, 1791, an avalanche of black fury descended upon the plantations of San Domingo. Toussaint L'Ouverture took no part in this initial insurrection. It was too violent, too precipitant, too blind an explosion of pent-up resentment to satisfy his Christian sense of justice. In their unbridled insanity the insurgents committed atrocities that were almost too ghastly to believe. They raped women, they transfixed babies on spearheads, they sandwiched a carpenter between wooden planks and sawed him in two, they nailed a planter to his gate and chopped off his limbs one by one.

The whites, in their turn, were as brutal as the blacks. The island was plunged into an uncivilized civil war without a leader or a discipline or a plan. Within two months after the outbreak of the revolt, the massacres accounted for the lives of 2,000 planters and 10,000 slaves.

And throughout this period, Toussaint held himself aloof from the fight. He placed himself at the head of the Negroes on his master's plantation, ordered them to hold their peace, and at great personal risk protected both his master and his master's family from the mob.

And then, as the flames of revolt had spread beyond human control, Toussaint got his master's family into a place of safety and joined the rebels.

At first they were loath to trust him. "Loyalty to a white master means disloyalty to the black slaves." Little by little, however, they allowed their reason to get the better of their passion. They placed him in charge of the wounded, for his knowledge of medicinal herbs was unsurpassed among the blacks.

So, too, was his knowledge of medicinal words. He knew how to abate the fury of the rabble and to channel its disorganized recklessness into an organized fight. It was not long before they recognized in him the one leader they could implicitly obey.

And even his opponents began to recognize in him the one

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rebellious leader they could always respect. In a surprise attack he captured the commander of a French regiment. Courteously he requested the commander to surrender his troops. The officer scornfully refused. "I may be a prisoner," he said, "but my men are not."

"I admire your courage," said Toussaint. "Permit me also to admire your humanity. Order your men to surrender. Their retreat is cut off. You will only be shedding their blood uselessly if you don't tell them to lay down their arms."

A man of many surprises, Toussaint L'Ouverture.

### V

TOUSSAINT'S power among the blacks was now supreme. This "magical man" was leading them from victory to victory. His mere word, they believed, would summon the very hosts of heaven to their aid.

This superstitious idolatry of the blacks was equaled only by the superstitious fear of the whites. Toussaint L'Ouverture must be somehow moved out of the way if the white supremacy of San Domingo was to be restored. Unable to conquer him by the power of their arms, they resorted to the wiles of diplomacy. In the spring of 1798 they sent a frantic appeal to the French government to summon Toussaint for an "accounting" as a citizen of the Republic. But Toussaint was too clever for the snare. When the French envoy, General Hédouille, invited Toussaint to set sail for a "well earned vacation" in Paris, Toussaint replied: "There is no ship big enough for a man like me."

At this point the British, ever on the quest for empire, saw an opportunity to acquire San Domingo with the help of Toussaint. Through their representative, General Maitland, they offered to make him the king of San Domingo—under the protection of the king of England. This snare also was too obvious for Toussaint. He preferred to remain a liberated slave rather than to become a captive king.



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The liberation of the slaves seemed now complete, when the French envoy hit upon a new stratagem. He stirred up the mulattoes against the blacks. "Keep the niggers fighting, so the planters will be able to keep all of them down."

For a time the mulattoes, better equipped than the blacks, maintained the upper hand. But the military genius of Toussaint finally won the day. "There's no obstacle in the world, neither mountain nor flood, neither avalanche nor hurricane, can stop this man!" On August 1, 1800, Toussaint marched into the enemy headquarters at Aux Cayes. He ordered all the mulattoes within the city to assemble in the church. As he ascended the pulpit to offer the *Te Deum* in honor of his victory, they looked on in terror. But their terror was turned into joy when he began to speak:

"Citizens, the welfare of the colony demands that we draw a curtain over the past and occupy ourselves only with the reparation of the evils resulting from the war . . . In my position as victor and wishing only to do good to my country, I shall be guided by the Lord's Prayer which says—*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. I hereby proclaim a general pardon to all . . . Let us now work together as brothers for the peace of San Domingo and the freedom of our race."

But in the meantime Napoleon had come into power, and Napoleon was averse to the freedom of the Negro race. Indeed, he was averse to the freedom of anyone but himself. He wanted nobody, least of all a black man, to share honors with him. The ex-slave was too romantic a figure to suit the ex-corporal. Moreover, Napoleon dreaded the prospect of a black supremacy in a French possession. No telling how far this black avalanche might spread. His spies had brought him disturbing reports about Toussaint's ungrammatical but fiery eloquence. In one of his speeches, it was told, the Negro general had filled a glass container with grains of black charred corn. Then he threw in a few grains of

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white corn at the top. "Look now," said Toussaint. "You are the black corn; your masters are the white." Suddenly he shook the glass, held it up to his spellbound audience, and shouted: "See, the white grains are swallowed up by the black!"

This man, Napoleon felt, must be swept out of the way.

Toussaint, on his part, was worried about Napoleon's attitude toward his race. "Today," he said, "we in Haiti are free through our own efforts. But our brothers in Guadeloupe and in Martinique are still enslaved through Napoleon's decree. As soon as Napoleon gets the chance, we too may be thrust back into slavery."

In order to forestall this possibility, Toussaint called together an assembly "to frame a constitution providing the colony with laws adapted to the requirements of the young nation." And, to show his utter good faith in the matter, he selected for the constitutional assembly seven white planters and three mulattoes—but not a single Negro.

The document contained seventy-seven articles, chief of which was the declaration that "slavery is hereby forever abolished in San Domingo, and all men born here are accepted into the citizenship of the French Republic." It was Toussaint's intention to establish in Haiti not an independent government but a free colony of France.

When the constitution was printed, Toussaint sent a special copy of it to Paris for Napoleon's ratification. "I hasten, Citizen Consul," wrote Toussaint in his accompanying letter to Napoleon, "to lay this document before you for your approbation and for the sanction of the Government which I serve . . . This constitution has been welcomed here by all classes of citizens with transports of joy which will not fail to be manifested afresh when it shall be sent back with the certification of the Government."

The constitution served as a fuse to the dynamite of Napoleon's hatred. How dared this black upstart dictate his own terms and

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draw up his own papers instead of waiting for orders from his chief! "I will not leave an epaulette on the shoulders of a single nigger in San Domingo!" As for Toussaint, Napoleon now had the necessary pretext for his punishment. Insubordination to his superior officer. He decided to send an expedition against him with orders for his arrest. And, as a subtle "inducement" for Toussaint's surrender, he sent along as hostages two of Toussaint's sons who had been studying in Paris. "Your father is a great man," said Napoleon to the two boys with unctuous hypocrisy. "He has rendered eminent services to France. You will tell him that I promise him protection, glory, and honor. Do not think that France intends to carry war to San Domingo. The army which it sends thither is destined not to attack the troops of the country but to augment their numbers."

Quite different, however, were the words he spoke to Charles Leclerc, his brother-in-law who led the expedition. "Subdue the island, and either kill or capture Toussaint. And, when you have done this, send all the niggers back into slavery."

Leclerc set out in the highest of spirits. It would be but a matter of a few weeks, he thought, to crush Toussaint and his "rebellious" mob. He took with him his wife, the giddy young sister of Napoleon. Together they would find a Paradise of pleasure in the tropical sensuality of San Domingo.

But, instead, they found hardship and humiliation and sickness and defeat. Leclerc had come into San Domingo not as a conciliator but as a conqueror. "I ordain," he said, "that General Toussaint is an outlaw. Every good citizen is commanded to seize him and to treat him as a rebel to the French Republic."

In answer to this command, every good citizen rallied around the standard of Toussaint. The easy conquest anticipated by Leclerc was turning into a war of endurance. And Toussaint's soldiers, accustomed to the climate of San Domingo, were the better able to endure. The military genius of Toussaint and an epidemic of yellow fever were taking too big a toll of Leclerc's

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forces. Finally Leclerc himself was stricken with the disease. When he recovered, he felt that he had had enough of fighting. He offered a truce to Toussaint. "If you make peace with me at this time," he wrote, "I swear before the face of the Supreme Being, to respect the liberty of the people of San Domingo."

Toussaint took him at his word. A Christian oath to him was a sacred thing. He came to see Leclerc about the truce. The French general was all smiles. "Our reconciliation," he said, "will bring prosperity once more to this island."

When the ceremonies were over, Leclerc turned jestingly to his former enemy. "Supposing the war continued, General, where would you get your munitions?"

"From your captured soldiers," retorted Toussaint.

## VI

THE fever had burned all the fight out of Leclerc. But it did not burn out of him the capacity for double dealing. By the terms of the peace, the Negroes were to remain free and Toussaint was to be allowed to live with his family undisturbed. These, however, were conditions which Leclerc had no intention to live up to. For he was constantly receiving orders from Napoleon to enslave the blacks and to send their leader to France. Until these two things were done, declared Napoleon, "an immense and beautiful colony will be always a volcano, and will inspire no confidence in capitalists, colonists, or commerce."

And so Leclerc waited for the opportunity to strike at Toussaint—not in the open field but insidiously behind his back. He set spies upon him to watch every move, to listen to every word, to open all his mail. He hoped that somehow, sometime, he would find a plausible reason for his arrest.

But as the days went by and no such reason appeared, Leclerc decided to seize him *without* a reason. He wrote a letter to Toussaint, inviting him to confer with General Brunet—one of Le-

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clerc's subordinates—and to advise him as to the disposition of the French troops in San Domingo.

Toussaint accepted the invitation. Brunet greeted him cordially upon his arrival. "Never," he said, "will you find a more sincere friend than myself."

They began their conference. After a few moments Brunet excused himself and left the room. Suddenly the door burst open and in rushed ten officers fully armed. "General, you are under arrest!"

Toussaint calmly faced his captors. "Very well, gentlemen, Heaven will avenge my cause."

They spirited him away at midnight and placed him aboard a vessel bound for France. On this same vessel were his wife, his two sons, and his two nieces, who like himself had been treacherously captured by the soldiers of Brunet.

But Toussaint was unable to see any of them; for he was locked up in a cabin where a squad of soldiers with fixed bayonets kept guard over him day and night. "Under no circumstances," Leclerc had warned his captors, "must Toussaint be allowed to escape. For his people superstitiously regard him as a religious leader."

Toussaint accepted his captivity with an unshaken trust in the justice of God. "They have only cut down the trunk of the tree of Negro liberty. The branches will shoot up again, for the roots are numerous and deep."

An unshaken trust in the justice of God, and of Napoleon. Toussaint had no inkling of Napoleon's animosity toward him. The dictator's communications to him had always been full of honeyed phrases. Toussaint felt convinced that Napoleon knew nothing of his arrest. He therefore sent him a letter to acquaint him with his plight. "Citizen First Consul," he wrote, "after the truce I signed with the Captain General (Leclerc), and after the word of honor he gave me as to the freedom of my people and the safety of myself, I withdrew into the bosom of my family.

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Scarcely had a month passed away when evil-disposed persons, by means of intrigues, effected my ruin . . . I was arrested and placed on board a vessel, I know not for what reason . . . I now put my case into your hands, for I have too high an idea of the greatness and justice of the First Magistrate of the French people to entertain even a moment's doubt of his impartiality."

Napoleon answered this letter with an order to confine Toussaint in the Fortress of Joux—a prison built on a rock that "shoots like an arrow into the clouds" on the Franco-Swiss border. There was no interview, no explanation, no formal charge, no trial. His captors, acting under the orders of Napoleon, just allowed him slowly to starve to death.

## VII

IN THE city of Port-au-Prince, capital of Haiti, there stands a statue depicting a slave who places a wreath upon the head of the liberator of his people. Toussaint was right. The roots of the tree of freedom were too deep for Napoleon's might. Three months after the death of Toussaint, Leclerc was dead; and twelve years after Toussaint's imprisonment at Joux, Napoleon himself was a prisoner at St. Helena. But the Negro Republic of Haiti has remained free to this day.





*Napoleon*





*Queen Victoria*

**NAPOLEON**

### *Important Dates in Life of Napoleon*

- 1769—Born in Corsica.
- 1785—Completed training at *École Militaire* in Paris.
- 1791—Promoted artillery lieutenant.
- 1793—Promoted general of brigade.
- 1794—Given command of the artillery of the army of Italy.
- 1795—Subdued royalist uprising in Paris.
- 1796—Married Josephine.
- 1797—Defeated Austrians and conquered Italy.
- 1798—Failure of his expedition to Egypt.
- 1799—Made first consul of France for ten years.
- 1800—Began long series of wars of conquest.
- 1802—Elected first consul for life with right to choose his successor.
- 1804—Crowned himself emperor.
- 1805—Won Battle of Austerlitz.
- 1806—Defeated Prussians at Jena.
- 1807—Peace of Tilsit.
- 1808—Beginning of seven years' war with Great Britain in Spain and Portugal.
- 1810—Divorced from Josephine, he married Marie Louise of Austria.
- 1812—Retreated from Moscow.
- 1814—Abdicated after defeat by Allies. Exiled to Elba.
- 1815—Escaped from Elba, and for hundred days was again master of France and commander of his armies. Defeated at Waterloo and exiled to St Helena.
- 1821—Died at Longwood, his prison home on the island.

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# Napoleon Bonaparte

1769—1821

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**N**APOLEONE BUONAPARTE was a freak of nature—a medieval tyrant living in the nineteenth century. He was a throwback, as Taine and Madame de Staël have pointed out, to the reckless adventurers and the petty dictators of the Italian Renaissance—an atavistic survival from the barbarous age of the Malatestas and the Borgias. Like them, he was brilliant, ambitious, cold blooded, selfish, arrogant, irresponsible and utterly devoid of the ethical principles of humanity. “I am not a man like others,” he declared with brutal frankness. “The laws of morality and decorum cannot be made to apply to me.” He considered himself as a creature apart from the rest of the world. All other living objects—men, women, children, animals—were merely instruments to serve his ambition. He used them as long as he had need of them, and then he broke them and cast them aside.

Born in Ajaccio, Corsica (August 15, 1769), he was one of the eight surviving children of Carlo Buonaparte and Maria Letizia Ramolino. His parents were poor, and the children were taught to shift for themselves. From early infancy, Napoleon

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had learned that it was not only the early bird, but the aggressive bird, that got the most nutritious worm. He developed an early tendency to growl and to grab and to stick his chin out defiantly into the face of the world.

His father realized that here was an efficient soldier in the making. Accordingly he took him to France and placed him (1779) in the military school at Brienne.

Here the youngster proved to be a taciturn, morose, lonely, pugnacious and indifferent student. He did, however, spend much time reading history, especially the history of war. This reading he continued at the military college in Paris, which he entered at the age of fifteen.

When he came up for his final examinations at this college (September, 1785) he passed forty-second out of a class of fifty-eight candidates. Proud of his new uniform, the youthful second lieutenant went to show himself off to his friends, a Corsican family from his home town of Ajaccio. But, instead of admiring him, his friends burst into laughter. For he was such a ridiculous spectacle—an amazingly little fellow in amazingly tremendous boots.

“I’ll show them!” he muttered under his breath. He would demonstrate to the world that the size of a man’s ambition had nothing to do with the size of his body. Caesar, too, he remembered, had been a man of very small stature.

## II

HE JOINED the artillery regiment of De la Fère, at Valence. Smarting under the inferiority of his undersized body, this “scarecrow in uniform” was determined to force his way, if necessary, into the good graces of his fellows. He took lessons in dancing and deportment, but he only succeeded in making himself all the more ridiculous. And so he went off to his own room, bitter, morose, unsocial, reading his histories about the great

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wars of the past and dreaming about his own great exploits in the wars of the future. He generally read with a notebook in hand, and he jotted down the important details, especially the gruesome details, of the leading battles of the world.

He was only twenty-two at the time, but he already showed the unscrupulousness of his character. He had obtained a leave of absence from his regiment, and he went to visit his family in Corsica. His brother, Giuseppe (later known as Joseph), was running as a candidate for the legislative assembly. Napoleon plunged into the campaign, using the methods of a soldier rather than those of a politician in his effort to secure his brother's election. He lied, he cheated, he bullied, he brawled and on one occasion he even kidnaped one of the rival candidates. When he came back to Paris, the sneak thieves and the guttersnipes began to smile upon him. He had proved himself a first-class ruffian. He was beginning to feel happy at last.

At this moment an opportunity offered itself for his reckless talents. The sans-culottes (men without breeches) were intoxicated with the first frenzy of their revolution. They were marching through the streets, smashing, looting, killing and shouting, "*Tremblez, tyrans!*" Napoleon joined them—not because he sympathized with their desire for freedom, but because in this revolution he found an opportunity for self-advancement. His younger brother, Lucien, was only too well aware of Napoleon's insincerity. "I see," he wrote to Joseph, "that in the case of this revolution Napoleon is merely trying to ride on the billows. And I think that for his personal interest he would be capable of becoming a turncoat."

Lucien proved to be only too good a reader of his brother's character.

Throughout the Revolution Napoleon was an opportunist. He was on Robespierre's side during the Reign of Terror; when Robespierre fell, he disavowed any connection with him, and when Barras came into power he immediately joined forces with

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him. He always managed to ally himself with the winning party, and he was brutally frank about it. "Robespierre," he confessed years later at St Helena, "was dead; Barras was playing a role of importance, and I had to attach myself to somebody or something."

This calculating "attachment" of his brought him an early opportunity for advancement. He was given the command of a portion of the artillery at the siege of Toulon. Here, partly through luck, partly through courage and partly through sheer military genius, he won a distinct triumph and a promotion to the rank of brigadier general.

Shortly thereafter, at the Battle of the Tuileries (October 5, 1795), he again distinguished himself against the counter-revolutionists. In rapid succession he was appointed second in command of the army of the interior, general of the division, and finally commander in chief of the army of the interior. "Fortune," he wrote to his brother, Joseph, "is on my side." He put on a resplendent uniform, rode in his own carriage and received the plaudits of the *citoyens* as the savior of the republic.

And then, having saved the republic, he proceeded to destroy it.

### III

BEFORE he started on his campaign to set himself up as the undisputed master of France he thought it wise to ingratiate himself with the influential ladies of Paris. He had learned the motto of the revolutionary politicians that the shortest way to success lay through the boudoir of some beautiful lady. One of the most influential, if not one of the most beautiful of these ladies, a protégée of Barras, was Josephine, the widow of Alexandre de Beauharnais. Her husband had lost his head on the guillotine in the Reign of Terror. Josephine herself had escaped the guillotine on that day because the physician in charge had certified that she was too ill to be moved.

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And now, by a strange twist of the fates, this aristocratic lady had been set up as one of the queens of the revolutionary salons of Paris. Napoleon met her, fell in love with her and decided to marry her. She was six years his senior and in affairs of the heart even more sophisticated than Napoleon. But his passion swept her off her feet. "My blood," he once remarked, "rushes through my veins like the waters of the Rhone." She was not quite sure that she loved him. She was, as she confided to a friend, rather afraid of him. But she yielded to his impetuosity and his amazing self-confidence. "My sword," he said, "is at my side, and with it I shall go far." And Josephine, in spite of her worldly sophistication, believed him when he spoke with such definite assurance. "I believe anything possible that this singular man may take into his head," she wrote to her friend. "With his imagination, who can tell where he will stop?"

Napoleon's love for Josephine was, apparently, sincere. But there was a predominant note of shrewdness in his sincerity. Josephine was able to pull the proper strings for him. "Barras," she wrote to her friend, "assures me that if I marry the general he will obtain for him the chief command of the army in Italy."

And, shortly after his marriage, Napoleon did obtain the chief command of that army. When he started his campaign against the Italians—his own countrymen, be it remembered—he proclaimed to them that he was coming to break their Austrian chains. But to his own soldiers, as they were about to descend upon Italy, he said: "We will levy (that is, plunder) 20,000,000 francs . . . in that country. . . . I will lead you into the most fertile plain in the world. There you will find . . . honor, glory, riches. . . ."

Napoleon himself found honor, glory and riches in his invasion of Italy. What most of his soldiers found there was nothing but a poor and inglorious grave.

There was one significant incident in connection with his Italian campaign. Just before he entered upon this campaign



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he changed his name. Napoleone Buonaparte became Napoleon Bonaparte. It was therefore, he reassured himself, as a Frenchman and not as an Italian that he despoiled and slaughtered the people of Italy.

His Italian campaign was brief, brilliant and brutal. He based his military philosophy upon the following savage doctrine: "Military glory is always most appreciated when it is paid for out of the pockets of other people." When he returned from Italy, flushed with victory and laden with spoils, he was hailed not only as a conqueror, but as a savior. Yet he hadn't the slightest idea of saving anybody or anything except his own private loot and his own egotistical power.

With the army at his back he set himself up as the dictator of the French people. "Do you think," he said, "that I have conquered Italy in order to benefit those lawyers in Paris?" He had won his victories, not for the sake of the lawyers, or for the sake of anybody else in Paris. His own glory was the sole pre-occupation of his life. He had begun to regard himself as a Man of Destiny. An element of superstition had become imbedded into the colossal self-assurance of his savage nature. Heaven, he believed, was fighting for him and for him alone. How else, he asked himself, could one explain this sudden and miraculous advance of an obscure little foreigner into the supreme mastery of France?

But this was not enough. He must become the supreme master of the world. He looked upon himself as another Caesar. He must not allow the glory of his past victories to fade. He must keep this glory alive by winning new, and ever new victories. He was, he said, an actor, the greatest actor of his age, of *any* age. To feed continuously upon the applause of the people he must put on a continuous show. And what show was most pleasant to the people? Why, the spectacle of liberty. That was it! He had "liberated" the French. He had "liberated" the Italians. And now he would "liberate" the Egyptians.

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And so he led his willing revolutionary lambs to the slaughter in Egypt and whipped them into a sacrificial fury by pointing to the pyramids and exclaiming: "From the tops of those pyramids, forty centuries look down on you!" This is one of the most famous and one of the most stupid utterances in history. It is symbolical of the entire spirit of militarism. It chains the living present to the dead past. It tells us to act the drama of our life before an audience of ghosts, to kill and to be killed because—forsooth!—forty centuries of corpses are witnessing our human sacrifices. It is the advice of a madman to a generation of fools. And the fools listened and died in order that the madman's glory might be increased.

And personal glory was the only motive for his Egyptian campaign. This he cynically admitted in his own *Mémoires*, written years later at St Helena. But he told his soldiers in Egypt, just as he had told his soldiers in Italy, that they were fighting for their own gain. "As a result of this campaign," he said, "each one of you will get money enough to buy six acres of land in France."

Six feet of land, he should have said. And not in France, but in Egypt. For his Egyptian campaign was a failure. His army was defeated, and its retreat was cut off by the British fleet under Nelson. But did this stop Napoleon? Not at all. He left the army to its fate and made his escape to France. And then, through his glowing and fanciful reports, he turned his defeat into a victory. It was a lucky thing for him that Egypt was so far away from France. The popular imagination, stirred by the mystery and the romance of the East, exulted in the return of Napoleon and forgot about the soldiers he had left behind. Months later, when the cold facts about the Egyptian fiasco arrived in Paris, they were brushed carelessly aside by the fantastic legends that had arisen around the exploits of the "Conqueror of the Nile." And to this day the legends are accepted with more credulity than the facts.

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### IV

NAPOLEON worshiped himself and despised all other men. And, above all, he despised Freedom, a word for which he had once pretended that he would be willing to lay down his life. He moved into the palace of Louis XIV and put on the royal crown. And the revolutionaries who had shaken off their *old* chains were now wild with hosannahs over the assumption of their *new* chains. The old tyrants were dead. Long live the new tyrant! On the very day of his entry into the palace he cut down the Liberty Trees which the republicans had planted in the courtyard. Instead of liberty he gave them toys. "Men are fond of toys," he said, "and are led by them." He entertained his lieutenants at elaborate state functions. He reintroduced the etiquette of the prerepublican days. He took the old titles out of the ash can, dusted them off and distributed them among his cronies. He revived the Legion of Honor. And he opened a theater for his friends at the chateau of Malmaison. Free shows instead of free souls. And the people looked on and shouted themselves red in the face and spilled their red blood on the battlefields for his further glory.

And his hunger for glory was unappeasable. He must conquer England, Spain, Austria, Germany, Russia. That would mean incalculable human suffering, disease, starvation, death. Well, what of it? People would call him unfeeling, merciless, unjust. What of that? The fear of the people would only tend to set him aside, aloof from human contact, above human society—a terrible and lonely god. It was the business of God to be alone. He took pride in the fact that people began to avoid him, were afraid to speak in his presence, never saw him smile. It pleased him to hear Talleyrand's epigram, in which that witty Frenchman called him "the man who could not be amused." That was the proper way for a man-god to act—to fight and frighten and kill and never to be amused.

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Napoleon suffered from a distorted mental vision. His own image loomed all out of proportion to the rest of humanity as he looked into the mirror of the world. He had none of the tender feelings of the healthy mind. He was a stranger to gratitude and he showed no sympathy for human suffering. He chloroformed his own wounded soldiers in Egypt because it was too expensive to nurse them back to health.

At the beginning of his career of conquest he had pretended that he was a friend of the oppressed. He had set up a number of republics in Europe, but only for a short time—just long enough to lull the suspicions of the people. Just as they were beginning to feel safe under his protection he turned all the republics back into monarchies and parceled them out among his brothers and his other relatives. He did this, not because he loved his relatives—he confessed that he had no affection even for his own family—but because he wanted to dazzle them with his power to make and to unmake kings. He sat upon the top of the ruined world “like a cockerel on a dunghill,” and his vulgar crowing still re-echoes in the palaces of the dictators who are trying to follow in his footsteps.

He was a vulgar showman. “I must dazzle and astonish,” he said. He staged his battles not only to enslave men, but to amaze them. Whoever might be responsible for his victories, he reserved all the applause for himself. He was his own most persistent barker. He delighted in making a big noise. “A great reputation,” he boasted, “is a great noise. The greater noise you make, the farther off you are heard. Laws, institutions, monuments, nations, all fall. But the noise continues and re-sounds in after ages.”

And so he strutted through the world, stealing, slandering, cheating, murdering and blustering about his own greatness until, as Victor Hugo puts it, “God was bored by him, and declared, ‘Assez de Bonaparte; we have had enough of Napoleon.’”

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

Then came his downfall—brought about by his own too great ambition. The decline of his power began with his decision to invade Russia. When he issued his orders to conscript the new army for the invasion of Russia he found that there were no less than 80,000 *conscrits réfractaires*—that is, conscientious objectors and other kinds of objectors. In order to avoid rebellion in the army he chained the new recruits together like convicts and marched them off under heavy guard to die on foreign soil in quarrels that were none of their own making. When the fathers and the mothers of France beheld their sons being thus dragged off to the sacrifice they began to doubt the divinity of their “bloodthirsty idol.” His prestige suffered a still greater defeat when he returned from Moscow (in 1812) with the miserable remnant of a thousand discouraged stragglers out of an army of 600,000 men. So long as he had been victorious many of his countrymen had been willing to sacrifice themselves, like moths, around the flames of his selfish glory. But after his disastrous retreat from Moscow their eyes were opened. They realized that he was nothing but a madman with a genius for slaughter. His mania had driven millions of young soldiers to a needless death, and his countrymen were determined to put a stop to any further mischief on his part.

They exiled him to the island of Elba. After eleven months, however, he escaped and returned to terrify the world once more with his insane and aggressive militarism. He conscripted a new army for new conquests. A passage from the *Mémoires* of Alexandre Dumas gives us an unforgettable picture of the popular feeling in France at this moment:

“Those who did not live at this period cannot conceive the depth of execration sounded in the hearts of mothers by the name of Napoleon. . . . The old enthusiasm was extinct. . . . It was not to France that mothers were making the sacrifice of their children; it was to the ambition, the egotism, the pride of one man. . . . Thanks to the millions of men squandered in the

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valleys and mountains of Spain, in the snows and rivers of Russia, in the swamps of Saxony and in the sands of Poland, the generation of men between twenty and twenty-five had disappeared. . . . Conscription now began at sixteen. . . . Mothers were counting with alarm the years of their children. . . . More than once my mother clasped me to her breast with a stifled sigh and tears in her eyes.

“What is it, Mother?” I would ask.

“When I think that in four years you will be a soldier, and that Man will take you from me—me from whom he has always taken and to whom he has never given— Oh, my child, my poor child!”

“And it was the general feeling which my mother thus expressed.”

But Napoleon was deaf to the cries of the mothers of France. He had never, he brutally confessed, “cared one iota” for human feelings or human life. And so he gathered his cattle and bound them and shipped them off to their new shambles. ✓

This time, fortunately, his orgy of bloodshed was short lived. Ninety days after his escape from Elba he was defeated at Waterloo. He tried to take ship to America but was captured by the English and sent away to nurse his criminal lusts and ambitions on the lonely shores of St Helena. When he heard the sentence he had the effrontery to scold his English judges for their “callous indifference to a fellow creature in distress.”

He lived for seven years on the island of St Helena, and he devoted these last seven years of his life to the preparation of his *Mémoires*, in which he magnified his own person to the dimensions of a demigod.

He died of cancer in 1821, and for a little while the world was at peace.



# QUEEN VICTORIA



*Important Dates in Life of Queen Victoria*

- 1819—Born at Kensington Palace.
- 1837—Became queen.
- 1838—Coronation.
- 1840—Married Prince Albert.
- 1842—Made her first railway journey.
- 1850—Sent ultimatum to Lord Palmerston, foreign secretary.
- 1851—Attended the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, largely the work of Prince Albert.
- 1856—Treaty of Paris, ending Crimean War.
- 1861—Prince Albert died of typhoid fever.
- 1862—Lord Palmerston became prime minister.
- 1865—Lord Russell succeeded Palmerston as prime minister.
- 1868—Gladstone became prime minister.
- 1874—Disraeli, favored by Victoria, became prime minister.
- 1878—Treaty of Berlin.
- 1880—Gladstone again chosen prime minister.
- 1897—Jubilee of sixtieth anniversary of the accession of Queen Victoria.
- 1899—Beginning of Boer War, which lasted four years.
- 1901—Died, after longest reign in British history.

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# Queen Victoria

1819–1901

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**I**T is five o'clock in the morning. King William IV has just died at Windsor Palace. The archbishop and the lord chamberlain have driven posthaste from Windsor to Kensington to report the king's death to Alexandrina Victoria, the king's eighteen-year-old niece and heir to the throne.

The new arrivals knock at the gate of Kensington Palace. But at first there is no answer. For it is too early for anybody to be up. After considerable knocking, however, they gain admittance. At six o'clock the Duchess of Kent, Victoria's mother, wakes up her daughter and tells her that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham have come to speak to her.

She gets out of bed, puts on her dressing gown and steps into the room where the messengers are waiting.

They fall on their knees, and Lord Conyngham announces the news. "The king is dead. Long live the queen!"

That day—June 20, 1837—Victoria made the following entry in her journal: "Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfill my duty toward my country; I am very young, and perhaps in many, though not in

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have.”

A good sentiment, but a poor style. Victoria never felt quite at home in the English language. For English was not her mother tongue. Her father, the English Duke of Kent, had died when she was a small child, and her mother, the daughter of the German Duke of Saxe-Coburg, had trained her from infancy to speak the German language and to develop a German cast of thought. To the end of her days Victoria was unable to speak English perfectly.

## II

ALEXANDRINA VICTORIA—they called her Drina in the family circle—was a spoiled child. She frequently flew into a passion, stamped her foot and disobeyed the instructions of her elders. Even before her coronation she displayed the temper of a little empress, and an *absolute* little empress at that. She wouldn't do her lessons; no matter what anybody said, she *just wouldn't*. Bribes, threats, arguments, nothing would help. Her lessons remained undone.

From the very outset she was encouraged to regard herself as a creature of supreme importance. Occasionally she was allowed to play with the child of some marquise or duchess who came to visit her mother. But she was taught to regard such children as *playthings* rather than *playfellows*. One day little Jane Ellice was taken by her grandmother, Lady Ellice, to Kensington Palace. The two children were told to entertain each other in Victoria's nursery. When Jane Ellice, unfamiliar with the palace etiquette, began to handle Victoria's toys, the little princess stopped her. "You must not play with these," she said. "They are mine." Then she added: "And you must not call me Victoria, though I may call you Jane."

In the entire Kensington household there was but one person

## QUEEN VICTORIA

who was able to exercise any influence on Victoria. And that was her governess, Fräulein Lehzen. This lady, the daughter of a German clergyman, had observed the one vulnerable spot in the child's armor of stubborn self-sufficiency. Victoria had an affectionate little heart. Win your way into that child's heart and you can get her to do anything for you. Under the gentle, yet strictly efficient guidance of Fräulein Lehzen, Victoria began to enjoy her lessons and to look at least with indulgence, if not with respect, upon the other members of the household. Fräulein Lehzen, in short, succeeded in turning a rather insufferable little princess into a rather likable little human being. As she grew older Victoria became gradually impressed with the fact that there would be duties as well as privileges in that exalted office of queenship for which she was being trained. When she first definitely learned that she was destined for the crown, she spoke just a few words: "I will be good." These words, in which there was a curious mingling of egotism and humility, she repeated once more on that early June morning when Lord Conyngham knelt before her and announced: "The king is dead. Long live the queen!"

### III

SHORTLY before her accession to the throne Victoria had met her two German cousins, Prince Ernest and Prince Albert. These two personable young fellows were the sons of her mother's oldest brother, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg. Victoria was very much impressed with them both—especially with Prince Albert. "Ernest," she wrote in her journal, "has dark hair, and fine dark eyes and eyebrows, but the nose and mouth are not good. . . . Albert is extremely handsome; his hair is about the same color as mine; his eyes are large and blue, and he has a beautiful nose and a very sweet mouth with fine teeth. . . . Both my cousins are so kind and good. . . . Ernest will be eighteen years old on the 21st of June, and Albert seven-

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

teen on the 26th of August. . . . They have both learnt a good deal and are very clever, naturally clever, *particularly* Albert."

When, after a visit of three weeks, her two cousins prepared to leave for their home in Germany, she felt desolate. "It was our last *happy, happy* breakfast," she confided to her journal, "with those *dearest* beloved cousins, whom I *do* love so *very, very* dearly. . . . Albert was playing on the piano when I came down. . . . I embraced both my dearest cousins most warmly. . . . I cried bitterly, very bitterly. . . ."

But, with the coming of the crown, she forgot her two cousins temporarily. With all her impetuous energy she threw herself into the business and pleasure of ruling her nation. Very small, very slender and very vivacious, she danced her way immediately into the hearts of her people. "Little Vic," as they affectionately called her, stepped with a charming grace and a carefree laugh from her nursery to her throne. "A more delightful little being you never beheld," wrote Mr Creevey, the professional gossip of Buckingham Palace. "She laughs in real earnest . . . and she eats quite as heartily as she laughs. I think I may say she gobbles. . . . She blushes and laughs every instant in so natural a way as to disarm anybody."

Her days were a succession of gilded hours. Eating, dancing, riding, social conversation in the drawing room of Buckingham Palace—such were the amusements that occupied most of her spare time. Occasionally she went to the opera, which she enjoyed, or to the drama, which she liked little and understood less. One evening she saw Macready in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Throughout the beginning of the play she chatted and laughed with the lord chamberlain. Toward the end she began to pay more attention to the play. "What does Her Majesty think of this drama?" ventured the lord chamberlain. "A strange, horrible business," replied the queen, "but, I suppose, good enough for Shakespeare's day."

## QUEEN VICTORIA

The serious business of the stage and the serious business of life were a little beyond her depth at this period. The guidance of her personal affairs she put into the capable hands of Dr Stockmar, a German native of Coburg who had been her father's friend and family physician. As for the guidance of the state, she left this in the equally capable hands of the prime minister, Viscount Melbourne.

Lord Melbourne was the conservative leader of the Liberal Party. Fifty-eight years of age, but still full of life and gusto and ambition, brilliant, charming, wealthy, an aristocrat of the aristocrats, he had philandered and intrigued and studied his way through the world until he thoroughly understood every phase of English life and letters. Having married a woman who proved faithless, and having repaid her with a like faithlessness of his own, he was now a confirmed cynic about human character and human destiny. Leave well enough—or rather ill enough—alone, was his motto. "You'd better try to do no good," he said, "and then you'll get into no scrapes." Democracy appeared to him a dream and a delusion. He adored the young queen with her naïve and childlike egotism and her undemocratic belief in her own unquestioned perfection. And Victoria, in her turn, was enchanted with Melbourne. She bullied him, she petted him, she confided in him, she quarreled with him and in the end she always obeyed him. Yet—so tactful was his policy with this little schoolgirl of a queen—he always succeeded in making her believe that she was expressing *her own* will when she was merely echoing *his* will.

And so, for a while, guided by the steady hand of Lord Melbourne, Victoria steered her ship through a smiling sea of public adulation. But suddenly a storm arose. England's respectability was rocked with a scandal about a lady and a gentleman of the court—Lady Flora Hastings and Sir John Conroy. These two members of the nobility had been seen returning from Scotland in the same carriage. Shortly after that the tongues

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

of England began to wag. Lady Flora, it was whispered, was about to become a mother. And the young queen, instead of putting an end to these unseemly rumors, actually helped to spread them. Even Lord Melbourne had forgotten his discretion. He allowed the sharp little tongue of the queen to spin its merry tale of tittle-tattle. Things came to a head when Lady Flora was found to be innocent—an unfortunate victim of cancer of which she died within a few months.

The storm now broke. The adulation of the public had turned to resentment against Victoria. "Nobody cares for the queen," wrote Greville, the clerk of the Privy Council. "Her popularity has sunk to zero."

### IV

THE queen was in disgrace and Lord Melbourne was sincerely repentant. His cynical old heart was for once touched to the quick. Like a father he began to watch over her, to lead her by the hand, to protect her against the ill will of her subjects, against the rashness of her own impetuous character. A husband must be found for her, a young man of her own age, to steady her, to bring her companionship, to produce an heir for the English throne.

And who better suited for that role than her young cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg? Lord Melbourne urged this marriage upon her, and so did Dr Stockmar. At first she objected. She liked her *dearest* cousin Albert, yes. But why marry him? Why marry anyone at all? Let her remain single. At least for a few years. Why all this hurry?

But royal marriages are made in heaven and in the council chambers of the prime ministers. And against the decrees of heaven and the prime ministers not even a queen of England could say nay. And so she finally agreed to see Albert if he cared to visit her again. "But," insisted the headstrong Victoria, "I will make *no final promise this year.*"

## QUEEN VICTORIA

Albert arrived in England. Once more her journal became the confidant of her rapture. She admired his "exquisite nose," his "delicate moustachios," his "slight but very slight whiskers," and his "beautiful figure" with its "broad shoulders and fine waist." He arrived on a Thursday. The following Tuesday she received him alone and told him that it would make her "*too happy* if he would consent" to marry her. Whereupon the prince murmured that he, too, would be very happy "*das Leben mit dir zuzubringen.*"

And so, once more, Victoria "made up her mind" to do what Lord Melbourne had decided as the best course for her.

They were married on February 10, 1840.

Chronologically, Albert was three months older than Victoria. Mentally, he was her senior by many years. He loved music, he had a healthy taste for painting and he was genuinely fond of literature. And, above all, he knew how to size up a man or a situation. But he showed not the slightest interest in politics. He was, in short, a spectator rather than an actor in the intricate game of life.

Perhaps, as Dr Stockmar reported to Lord Melbourne, Prince Albert's inactivity in political matters was due to an inherent weakness in his constitution. Nothing serious, said Dr Stockmar, but merely an indication for a quiet life.

At first there was little in common between this silent and scholarly prince and the ebullient and laughter-loving queen. He would have liked to surround himself with scientists and artists and writers, but Victoria "had no fancy to encourage such people." And so the adjustment period of their married life was a period of storms and quarrels. Both of them had strong wills, and if there was to be any harmony in the family circle one of these wills was bound to yield to the other.

And, surprisingly enough, it was the impetuous Victoria who yielded to the taciturn Albert. For she was madly in love with him. One day—so the story goes—Albert locked himself into



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his room after one of their wrangles. Victoria knocked furiously upon the door.

“Who is there?”

“The queen of England, and she demands to be admitted!”

The door remained closed against her. Another avalanche of knocks.

“Who is there?”

“The queen of England!”

Still the door remained closed. Again and again, the same repetition of knocks, the same question, the same answer.

Finally, the tapping on the door became more gentle.

“Who is there?”

“Your wife, Albert.”

Whereupon Albert opened the door and admitted Victoria into his room.

DR STOCKMAR took Albert in hand and gradually transformed him into a politician. For Stockmar, like Albert, was Teutonic, and both of them at bottom had a strong taste for absolute monarchy as against constitutional government. Lord Melbourne had passed out of the ministry, and Sir Robert Peel had taken his place. Victoria detested her new prime minister, and little by little she got into the habit of consulting her husband about important political decisions. And in all such decisions Prince Albert, guided by the ever-watchful Stockmar, molded Victoria's mind into a Teutonic form of political thought. At last there was absolute harmony between the royal couple. Albert had become the virtual king of England, and Victoria was content in her secondary role of obedient *hausfrau*. She looked after his health, she adored his cleverness, she followed his wishes and she presented him—after the good old German fashion—with a plentiful crop of royal children. “Thank God!” she wrote in her journal. “I now know what real happiness is.”

## QUEEN VICTORIA

But the English public resented her subservience to Albert. England, it was whispered, was being ruled, and ruled dictatorially, by a foreigner. And Albert, on his part, insisted upon his royal and marital rights to rule his queen, and through her, the entire populace of England. It was his privilege, he asserted to the Duke of Wellington, nay, it was his *duty* to "make his position entirely a part of Victoria's"—to fill up every gap which, as a woman, she would naturally leave in the exercise of her regal functions. Since he was "the natural head of the family," he continued, he regarded himself as the "superintendent of her household, the manager of her private affairs, her sole confidential adviser in politics, the tutor of the royal children, the private secretary of the sovereign and her permanent minister." In short, her lord and master, as well as the lord and master of England.

Prince Albert was supreme. Yet he was unhappy. For, after his own lights, he was a sincere and honest and benevolent and gentle ruler. He did only what, in his opinion, was best for his wife's people. And he, far better than they, he was convinced, knew just exactly what was good for them. For was he not a scholar? And a German? A member of that superior race of scientists and soldiers and philosophers? So why did the English people distrust him? Why didn't they obey and respect and *love* him as he deserved?

By heaven, he would *make* them obey and respect and love him! He would show them how a German prince could work! From early morning till late at night he sat at his desk, reading dispatches, studying figures and devising plans—plans that would make England a better, wiser, safer and healthier place to live in. A place, for instance, like Germany. Ah, *that* was an ideal to live and to die for! "To turn England into a real monarchy instead of a sham democracy!"

Such was the foolish and impossible dream for which Albert toiled day and night and for which he finally laid down his life.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

The strain of his overwork proved too much for his none too vigorous constitution. He was stricken with an attack of typhoid fever. For a time it looked as if he might recover. His mind, as Victoria bent over him, would come out of its feverish wanderings and he would smile and murmur, "*liebes Weibchen.*" But then there was a turn for the worse, and on December 14, 1861, the man who had dreamed of the absolute monarchy of England was summoned into the absolute democracy of death.

### VI

THE rest of Victoria's life is a study in black and white—the long black night of her grief over the death of Prince Albert and the final white splendor of her glorious old age.

The death of Prince Albert was a terrific blow to Victoria. It was no ordinary anguish that she suffered at the loss of so beloved a husband. It was a *royal* anguish, a resentment against a destiny that had no respect for the feelings of a queen. How dared heaven to treat her like an ordinary mortal! No, she would *not* be treated like an ordinary mortal. She would act as though Albert were still alive, as though he were still there to guide her and plan for her and advise her. In a letter that she wrote to her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, she expressed her "firm resolve . . . that *his* (Albert's) wishes—*his* plans . . . *his* views . . . are to be *my* law! And *no human power* will make me swerve from what *he* decided and wished." Victoria was determined to be ruled by the dead hand of an absolute king. "She became," writes Lytton Strachey, "an ardent champion of the Prussian point of view."

Her English subjects resented this attitude on her part. They liked neither her excessive Prussianism nor her excessive lamentation. She wanted to be regarded as a "dreary sad pinnacle of solitary grandeur." But her people merely regarded her as a selfish and stubborn little lady who forgot the interests of a

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hundred million *living* persons in her unreasonable adoration for one *dead* person.

And selfish and stubborn she remained, year after year. She had, she told her intimates, a sacred duty to perform. She must devote her life to the perpetuation of her husband's greatness. The English people had misunderstood him. That must not be. They must learn to understand him, to admire him, to *worship* him, even as she did. And so she ordered one of the leading biographers of England, Mr Theodore Martin, to write a complete biography of Prince Albert. This biography, she insisted, must be written with *her* assistance, and under *her* supervision. The style was to be the style of Mr Martin, but the thoughts were to be the thoughts of Queen Victoria. Mr Martin undertook the job and finished it after fourteen years. It was a monumental work of four volumes—well documented, well planned, well written and, like the subject that it tried to immortalize, absolutely dead. Prince Albert stands forth in those pages as the gilded statue of a benevolent hero in a dime novel, too, too lovely to be interesting and too, too good to be true.

But the queen, unaware of the public snickerings behind her back, went on with the apotheosis of her prince consort. She built, at the cost of two hundred thousand pounds, a splendid mausoleum for Albert, and she set up, at the expense of several hundred thousand additional pounds, a commemorative shrine with a ten-ton statue of Albert, executed in bronze, as a centerpiece.

And then she rested from her immortalization of Albert and returned to live among the mortals of England.

The one man who brought her down from her unpopular pinnacle of "sad solitary grandeur," and who founded for her a shrine in the hearts of her people, was Benjamin Disraeli. And he succeeded in doing this by a very simple method. All the other Englishmen had criticized her excessive devotion to Albert. Disraeli praised it. He killed her vanity by feeding it.

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

"The prince," he said (speaking of himself in the third person), "is the only man whom Mr Disraeli has ever known who realized the ideal." As for Victoria herself, Disraeli frequently in addressing her used the phrase, "we authors, ma'am." Was there ever so delightful a minister as Dizzy? thought the queen, as she gave him her royal hand to kiss. And Disraeli took her hand and gracefully led her back to her estranged people.

When the people saw her they took pity upon her. A sad, stout, gray-haired, foolish, pathetic little woman. Nothing so very haughty about her, after all. Rather human, like themselves. A widowed mother. And she was having her sorrows, poor little thing. Her daughter, the Princess Alice, had died recently. And some of her dearest friends, too, had died.

And then there came an attempted assassination that almost cost Victoria her own life. The people were horrified at the attempt, and jubilant over its failure. Their pity for the little old lady was rapidly turning into affection. And Victoria, rejoicing in the changed attitude of her subjects, began to take an active and genuine interest in their public functions. She attended concerts, the theater, lectures. She was present at the laying of cornerstones and the launching of battleships. Once, at the opening of an international exposition in Liverpool, she drove through the streets in her open carriage amidst a pelting rain. She had guts, that gray-haired little queen of theirs!

At last she was happy—the beloved queen of a prosperous nation. The queen, but not the tyrant. The shadow of Albert's domination had now passed out of her life. She was no longer interested in absolute dictatorship—except in her own family circle. Here she insisted upon her undivided sway as the royal matriarch. Children, grand-children, great-grand-children, all of them trembled at the sound of her voice. On one occasion the Prince of Wales, who was fifty years old at the time, was a little late for dinner. The delay in his arrival was due to no fault on his part, but he didn't dare to face the displeasure of his

## QUEEN VICTORIA

mother. The attendants, when they went to look for him, found him standing behind a pillar and nervously mopping his forehead.

For Victoria was a martinet for promptness and a stickler for the etiquette of the royal court. The niceties of the conventions and the respectfulness due to all those of superior rank must be followed to the last letter. And yet she took a motherly interest not only in the welfare of her own family, but in the joys and the sorrows of the palace attendants down to the last laundress and scullery maid. In her later years she even unbent her royal dignity to the extent of allowing her older courtiers, especially those who had suffered from a recent illness, to sit in her presence.

The older she grew the more human she became. And the less queenly. For along with the growth of her personal prestige came the decay in the prestige of the British crown. At the end of her life she was the most popular ruler in English history. And, at that very moment, the idea of royalty had reached its most unpopular stage in English history.

And thus she entered upon the twilight of her long life, receiving the love of her people but not their obedience. When, in 1897, she rode through the London streets on the sixtieth Jubilee of her reign, the adoration of her subjects knew no bounds. Her eyes were filled with tears as she whispered over and over again: "How kind they are to me! How kind they are to me!"

She lived another four years after the Jubilee. And they were not altogether happy years. For the imperial ambitions of England had plunged the country into the Boer War. She suffered with the sufferings of her people. She sympathized with their losses. She, too, had known the pangs of a mother who lost her children. In spite of her old age she worked steadily at her desk, doing everything in her power to serve the cause of her country.

At last the strain and the worry began to tell. In the summer

## LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS RULERS

of 1900 her memory began to fail, and by the end of that year her strength was well-nigh gone.

She lived long enough, however, to see the beginning of the new century. On January 14, 1901, she had a long interview with Lord Roberts, the victorious British commander in the Boer War. This was the last public act of her long life. A few days later (January 22, 1901) she slipped quietly out of the drama in which she had played so prominent a part.

### VII

"I FEEL listless and sad," remarks Jane Marryot in Noel Coward's *Cavalcade*, "just as though Victoria's death were a personal grief. Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes," replies her friend, Margaret Harris, "I think everyone feels that."

**KAISER WILHELM**



*Important Dates in Life of Kaiser Wilhelm*

- 1859—Born in Germany.  
1881—Married Princess Augusta Victoria.  
1888—Ascended the throne.  
1890—Dismissed Bismarck as chancellor.  
1897—Made expansion of German navy a major policy.  
1905—Tangier incident.  
1908—Forced by Reichstag protests to declare he would undertake no important political steps without advice of chancellor.  
1912—Declined to limit German naval expansion.  
1914—Germany declared war on Russia and France and invaded neutral Belgium, precipitating World War.  
1918—Germany lost war, Wilhelm abdicated and fled to Holland.



*Kaiser Wilhelm*



*Stalin*

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# Kaiser Wilhelm

1859—1941

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**H**E WAS BORN half dead. For a solid hour the nurses tried desperately to slap life into him. When at last they succeeded his left arm hung limply down from its shoulder socket. At first they believed the trouble to be deep rooted, for the infant also suffered pain in his left leg and his left ear. But it soon became apparent that the withered branch would not permanently affect the tree. The trouble was proved local.

Yet the left arm remained a physical handicap. Moreover, this physical disability left a permanent scar upon the mental outlook of the boy. So that, in a wider sense, the tree did suffer from the infirmity of the branch.

A cripple had been born into a Spartan household. It was traditional that a prince of Prussia must learn to ride the war horse as soon as he had learned to walk. And this latest Hohenzollern heir was put through the usual military routine. God had failed to bless His most recent creature with a soldier's constitution, and the Hohenzollerns were not slow to remind Him of His oversight. Painstakingly they taught the little boy to acquire a sense of balance in the saddle. The child went through a great

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deal of mental and physical anguish. He was lopsided, and he fell out of the saddle easily and often. But he gritted his teeth, silenced his pain and held the reins in his right hand more firmly on the next attempt. It was only the fear of the tumble that kept him astride the horse—that and an amazing will power. He became an accomplished horseman, an accomplished leader of his army, an accomplished Prussian prince.

You might train a poor deformed boy to perform like a monkey, but you couldn't still his inward pain. Indeed, the tutors of Prince Wilhelm only succeeded in aggravating his pain and in embittering his soul. They developed in him an intense feeling of inferiority toward the healthy men and women of the world and an equally intense resentment against all these healthier fellow creatures. How dared heaven endow others with gifts denied to him, the young prince of the Hohenzollerns!

But there were many factors to compensate this young prince for his crippled body. From his earliest years he had been taught, as a result of the endless military parades, to feel his close identification with the Prussian corps, "the mightiest army in the world." At the age of seven he had witnessed the victory march of this army which his father, the crown prince, had commanded in the great struggle against the Austrians. At the age of ten he was presented with a commission in the First Regiment of the Guards, and he paraded with them proudly past his grandfather, the reigning emperor of Prussia. At twelve he rode with the emperor at the head of the Prussian troops upon their return from their French victory, in the most formidable triumphal procession the world had ever seen. Indeed, as soon as he was able to feel any compensating factor for his physical misfortune it was this consciousness of military power that gave him his deepest satisfaction. It developed in him a megalomania that bristled all over his personality like the needles of a porcupine. Brought up with the idea that his Prussian armies would conquer everybody, he began to look upon himself as being already

## KAISER WILHELM

the ruler of the world. To him alone was given the right to take a seat side by side with God. He could conceive of no other mortal as having the mental ability, or the ethical right, to compete with him.

He was a crippled young god who ruled everybody and hated everybody. Especially his mother. It was his mother, he felt, who was to blame for his maimed body. For she, the daughter of Queen Victoria, was an Englishwoman. An inferior race of weaklings, that's what the English were. Surely a Prussian couldn't be responsible for a prince with a paralyzed hand! Moreover, Wilhelm's Prussian tutors led him to believe that his mother was advancing the interests of England at the expense of his grandfather's Prussian policy. Why, these English had even led astray his own father, the crown prince. Steeped in the parliamentary liberalism of Great Britain, his father was waiting for the death of the old king, now past eighty, and planning a policy of "weak-kneed pacifism" to replace the sturdy militarism of the Hohenzollerns.

But he, Wilhelm, would remain a militarist to the end. In spite of his father. After all, nobody lived forever. Someday he, himself, would be king. And then let the English beware! "These English," he wrote in one of his innumerable letters, "have accidentally forgotten that *I* exist."

## II

As THE old emperor drew close to death, word was suddenly flashed to the world that his son, the crown prince, had been seized with a malignant tumor of the throat. He was given only a few months to live. Wilhelm, the grandson, considered himself as good as Kaiser already. With marked callousness, he had drawn up in secret an imperial edict which he would publicly proclaim as soon as he received the crown. Bismarck kept a copy of this document in safe custody and advised the young prince

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to burn the original. For he feared a public scandal if it should become known that Wilhelm was already regarding himself as the king while his grandfather was still on the throne and his father was still alive to succeed him.

The old emperor died shortly, and the crown prince came to the throne. For many years he had been biding his time and dreaming of his plans for a social utopia in Germany as soon as he should become king. But now his kingship was a mockery. He couldn't speak above a whisper, and he was too weak to witness the review of his troops. He lay on his deathbed, holding the hand of his wife who had dreamed and planned and waited patiently with him through all their married years. He now entrusted her, with a pleading look in his eyes, to the care of Bismarck. For he could not rely upon his son. Indeed, he realized that the entire kingdom hated the Englishwoman. And before he closed his eyes he dispatched to his mother-in-law, Queen Victoria, his personal diary—a pathetic journal of the abuse that he and his wife had suffered at the hands of the backward-looking hosts of Prussia.

One of the first acts of the new Kaiser Wilhelm was to search for this diary. But he was too late to confiscate it. And so he decided to brazen it out and to declare a chip-on-the-shoulder policy toward all the nations in place of the policy of international neighborliness as attempted in the all-too-brief reign of his father. His father had once intimated that he would restore to France the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine and thus heal the perpetual sore spot of Franco-German relations. But his father's body had hardly grown cold before the new Kaiser made a bristling speech in which he clearly defined his own attitude on the two disputed provinces. "On this point," he said, "there can be only one decision—namely, that we will sacrifice our eighteen army divisions and our forty-two millions of inhabitants on the field of battle before we surrender a single foot of Alsace-Lorraine."

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Queen Victoria in England viewed the accession of her ebullient grandson with a troubled face. She realized that he and Prince Bismarck were two of a kind who "were bent on a return to the oldest times of government." What she failed to realize was the fact that Bismarck's power was at an end. It was he who had built the German Empire by taming all Europe under his iron heel. But he had been unable to tame his energetic young master. The king owed the development of his mentality to Bismarck, to be sure. Bismarck had created the monstrous ideology. But that monstrous ideology now overthrew its creator.

On his first visit to his grandmother after his accession to the throne the Kaiser inspected the British navy and volunteered his instructions on naval warfare, since he had read one or two books on the subject. The people of England took an instant dislike to this swaggering busybody. And even his old grandmother found him quite trying when he offered her his lengthy instructions on the art of government. By his own judgment he was the world's greatest authority on every subject under the sun. He went back to Germany, after this English trip, with visions of outdoing England by building a bigger, better navy of his own. He admired his grandmother sufficiently to become obsessed with the idea of outdoing her in all her accomplishments. Even through war, if necessary. As for the consequences of such a step, he never took the trouble to bother about them. He had inherited a country of forty million subjects, without the slightest sense of responsibility toward them. He regarded his Germans as so many instruments for the carrying out of the dictates of his will. And his will was that of a spoiled child.

Outside of his physical infirmity Kaiser Wilhelm hardly knew what it meant to suffer. And therefore he developed no tenderness, no heart. His mother had complained that he was like a child who pulled the wings off a fly out of sheer thoughtlessness. His curiosity for adventure took him on constant cruises upon



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his battleships. He would line up the old dignified navy officers on deck and force them to bend their arms and legs in constant exercises. And then, as they squatted in awkward positions with outstretched arms and legs, he would sneak up stealthily behind them and push them over. Such was the level of his humor.

He was a buffoon with a saber rattling in his hand. And most of his courtiers encouraged him in his saber rattling. For they were a rabble of sycophants who built their fortunes upon a foundation of honeyed words.

Wilhelm had an almost feminine avidity for flattery. Above all he loved to hear himself praised for his inflexible determination. "There is but one law," he told his soldiers. "And that is my will." Bismarck had dared to oppose this will and was utterly broken. And yet the will of the Kaiser was not the unyielding courage of a soldier, but the headstrong obstinacy of a child. It appeared strong simply because there were no stronger forces to oppose it.

But there was one friend who exercised a powerful influence over this stubborn child of a king. This man was Philip Eulenberg. In the personality of Eulenberg, which so mysteriously and emphatically attracted the Kaiser, we may find a significant clue to the complexity of Wilhelm himself. Eulenberg, twelve years older than the Kaiser, was a mild-mannered, aesthetically minded, romantic individual whose sensibilities were almost feminine. There was in him the very reverse of male bluntness and Prussian directness that characterized Kaiser Wilhelm and the German militarism for which he stood. Eulenberg wrote verses, played the piano and sought with delicate footsteps the pathway to beauty. There was an enduring softness about him, a receptivity that soothed and at the same time tantalized the emotional intensity of the Kaiser. The two men sealed their friendship at the Bayreuth festivals. Wilhelm would sit for hours in fascination while Eulenberg sang Nordic lays in baritone. To Eulenberg alone did the Kaiser pour out his heart. To him

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he complained of the flatness of his official life, the dull dry routine, the insignificance of it all. The Kaiser composed poetry for him and called him his bosom friend, the only one he had. "*Das Leben ohne Freud ist wohl eine Traurigkeit,*" was Eulenberg's motto—a sentiment he had carved out on a hunting knife that he presented to the Kaiser. "Life without joy is sadness." Eulenberg was permitted the greatest liberties. No one ever spoke to the Kaiser more frankly or with greater effect. He criticized the Kaiser with impunity. For the Kaiser worshiped him with a rare sort of love, a love he did not reserve even for his wife. Wilhelm followed this enchanting man as a little child follows his charming young schoolteacher. All the Kaiser's inhibitions and all the false compensating factors for his deeply hidden self had melted away in the warmth of this friendship. Eulenberg's presence was like a sweet south breeze that softened the Thessalian climate of Wilhelm's life. It offered him an escape from his public role as despot into his own true realm as a child. The wild yearning romanticism in him longed to get out of its goose step and to mingle with the soothing spirit of Eulenberg's temperament.

Eventually, frightened by the charges of homosexuality, Wilhelm tore himself away from the society of this man. Yet the friendship stands out as a gentle interlude in the tempestuous epic of the Kaiser's life. It is the story of what might have happened had the Kaiser not been born to a crown, the saddle of an army horse, the throne of a military empire. It is the germ of a potential story about a happy man, not the actual story of a tragic king.

### III

THE KAISER was a timid soul underneath his swashbuckling exterior. Faced with a decision that called for action, he cowered like a schoolboy. For example, he had made much ado about an alliance of England with Germany, a combination of Eng-

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land's navy and Germany's army that would sweep Europe so clean as to make it impossible "even for a mouse to dare to lift its head." In 1893 he attended, as usual, the naval regatta in England and entered his own yacht in the races. But suddenly a crisis arose between England and France as a result of their colonial rivalry in the East. The French had sent an expedition to Asia and were blockading Bangkok. This was serious business, for it threatened to interfere with vital British interests in India. It looked as if war was inevitable. And of course all eyes were turned toward the Kaiser, who had boasted endlessly of the support he would lend England in the event of such a crisis as this. He had as blandly offered his unconditional support to England in a European crisis, just as twenty-one years later he was to offer his unconditional support to Austria. And in neither case had he faced the consequences squarely. In neither case did he, deep down in his heart, expect the worst. He was lavish with his promises because they cost him nothing but dramatic words—and perhaps the lives of a few millions of his people. However, when France had landed its troops in Asia he spent a few anxious hours on board his yacht, the Meteor. For the implications of a war between England and France and the prospect of France and Russia attacking Germany on two borders had sent him into a panic. Fortunately, the crisis passed. He breathed a sigh of relief and went back to his yacht racing.

The sea was his greatest joy. He loved the spray of the salt water on his cheeks. And so he proceeded to transform boat racing into a national sport. All Germany became navy minded. The Kaiser himself took to designing battleships with the enthusiasm of a connoisseur. He announced to a noted engineer that he had invented—on paper—a warship that would throw every other existing craft into the discard. The engineer glanced at the plans and turned to the Kaiser:

"The ship which Your Majesty has designed would be the mightiest, the most terrible, as well as the loveliest battleship

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ever seen. She would surpass anything now afloat, her masts would be the tallest in the world, her guns would outrange all others. . . . This wonderful vessel has only one fault: if she were put on the water she would sink like a lump of lead." This, however, failed to dampen the ardor of the Kaiser. He remained still the great experimenter. He turned from the sea to his farms. He tried to mate cows with buffaloes in an effort to produce a new cattle breed, "the finest in the world," for Germany must be first in *something or other*. He even began to dabble with ceramics, opening a factory for the production of "the most beautiful pottery in the world." In vain did his master potters tell him that it couldn't be done, since the clay in the vicinity of the factory was coarse in texture and more suitable for bricks than for fine earthenware. The Kaiser kept on with his experiments in the spirit of the old alchemists. His ignorance of science didn't hinder his imagination any more than it hindered the imagination of his grandfather, from whom he had inherited his versatility. That old fellow had composed hymns in Latin, had etched in copper and had tried to transform garbage into manure for fertilization purposes—all unsuccessfully.

"The Kaiser is an idiot," remarked his uncle, Prince Edward of England. "Nobody knows what an utter idiot he is." But his own German soldiers idolized him. He told them that they must be prepared to shoot down their fathers and their mothers if he ordered them to do so. When the German expeditionary force was on the point of embarking to intervene as a part of the international police force in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion he instructed his soldiers as follows: "There will be no quarter; no prisoners will be taken. Just as, a thousand years ago, the Huns under King Attila gained for themselves a name which still stands for a terror in tradition and story, so may the name of Deutschland be impressed by you for a thousand years so thoroughly that never again shall a Chinese dare so much as to look askance at a German." Several years later the press throughout

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the world was to take up this term of "Hun" and to hurl it back into the Kaiser's face.

But the opinion of the world meant nothing to him. He was sufficient unto himself and proud of this self-sufficiency. "Look," he would bellow as he grasped the hands of ladies in the viselike grip of his good hand. "The mailed fist!" Yes, the mailed fist—that's what he needed. Especially when the whole world was conspiring against him, when even Uncle Edward was secretly maneuvering with France and Russia to surround him and crush him because he hated him. But he would show them, he would show them all! He would make his voice, seconded by his fist, heard around the council tables of Europe. "Through all the years of my reign," he cried, "my colleagues, the monarchs of Europe, have paid no attention to what I have had to say. But soon my army and my navy shall make them respect my words. They shall make them burst with envy." Count von Bülow, his foreign minister, couldn't understand why the Kaiser wanted his cousin Edward to "burst with envy." To build a great German army and navy for a friendly German Empire was the official explanation of the foreign office for the great German expansion program that had been set afoot. But Bülow himself knew that the Kaiser's conception of empire was not friendly. To the Kaiser there could be no equality among nations, just as there could be no equality among men.

The British were displeased, and indeed alarmed, at the industry with which Germany was constructing battleships in size and numbers to rival her own. They feared trouble. Whereupon Sir John Fisher, the British admiral, declared that his countrymen need not be alarmed. He suggested that the British fleet should put to sea and sink the German fleet without the formality of a declaration of war, and that they should then cease to worry their heads about the Germans. The Kaiser was shocked at the ingratitude of the English who, as he testified, were so dear to him. It was that fiendish cousin, Edward, who was to

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blame for this attitude on the part of his compatriots. Well, he would teach that nasty relative a lesson he would never forget!

### IV

THE KAISER held a regatta at Kiel one spring day. He had read the morning service to his crew aboard the Hohenzollern, and he was preparing to enter his craft in the afternoon races when a motorboat drew up alongside his yacht and a messenger hailed him with a dispatch.

“Confound it,” grumbled the emperor. “No state business now.” For he was about to engage in his favorite sport. The messenger folded the dispatch inside his cigarette case and threw it on board. It contained the news of the assassination of the Austrian crown prince at Sarajevo. An annoying business. Now the Kaiser would be obliged to lower the flag on his ship to half-mast and to call off the races. Why did things like that always happen to spoil the Kaiser’s fun? Well, no doubt the Serbians ought to be wiped off the face of the earth. They were a nation of criminals. He told the Austrian ambassador to go ahead and wreak full vengeance on this state, which in the European sense was not a state at all. Wilhelm loved a show at someone else’s expense. His chancellor had told him not to have the slightest fear of European complications. There wasn’t the least danger that the other nations would make trouble. And this was precisely what Wilhelm wanted—a chance to rant and to bully at the smallest possible risk. And if the other nations meant to fight, why then he was more than ready for them. His own army would strike the first blow. In war, as in peace, Germany must always be in the lead.

As for his own person, he intended to be as far as possible from the scene of the fighting. He went away from Berlin on a Scandinavian cruise and left his ministers to worry their heads about the whole business. He never liked to be in the vicinity of trouble.

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But, of course, there would be no trouble. There had been countless international crises in the past, and they had blown over just as this would blow over. Such was life—just a series of bluffs and loud words. And if you were smart you were never called upon to eat your words. At most, it might be necessary to invade a small and weak country. Like Serbia, for instance, or Belgium. *That* would make them all scuttle into their holes!

And so, on board his ship, he sent messages to Austria, chiding her for her slow deliberation in issuing an ultimatum. He loved action, not sparring. "Put an end to discussion!" he wrote. "Ultimata are either carried out or not." Someone ventured the silly suggestion that perhaps Russia might back Serbia and fight for her. What, his cousin Nicky fight for Serbia? Preposterous idea! "All this," he wrote privately, "is sheer bunkum, and events will soon prove it to be so." And when the news reached him that the severe Austrian ultimatum had been accepted in practically all its clauses by Serbia, he said triumphantly, "Well, see what I said?" A brilliant solution to the whole problem—and in barely forty-eight hours. A great moral victory for Vienna, and every pretext for war dumped into the rubbish heap. He breathed a sigh of relief. With his unrealistic outlook upon the world he believed that peace was a certainty and that the way was clear for him to live and fight another day. Someday in the vague future—he'd rather not be too precise about the date. But for the present no further cause for war existed.

But suppose Russia decides to mobilize? And England, and France? That persistent thought . . .

News reached him that it was true. Russia *had* decided to mobilize. A million men. Russia was ready for war. Nicky couldn't do that to him. Nicky couldn't join a band of criminals in Serbia. It just couldn't be! He wired Czar Nicholas, imploring him to refrain from taking extreme measures. What was the matter with the Slav mentality? Did the czar want to plunge them both into a war that would shake their dynasties from their

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foundations? Cousins who are kings on shaky thrones must stick together. What had happened to Nicky? Had he fallen under the influence of his unscrupulous generals? What was the meaning of all those soldiers on the Russian border? Kaiser Wilhelm didn't understand the tramp of armed enemies when they were in earnest. He couldn't grasp those new forces that were now ready to erupt. This was so entirely different from his old Europe—the Europe of peace and bluff, the Europe that had always listened to his belligerent threats and had allowed them to echo back to him in silence. This was a new Europe that meant business, that was determined to make him stand up and play the role for which he had always clamored—the role of the hero, the soldier, the conqueror. They were setting the stage and giving him his opportunity to act the War Lord of the World.

But now that the time had arrived for his actual entrance upon the stage he broke down completely. The saber slid out of his hand, and the battle cry rattled in his throat. No threats now, but tears, the outpouring of wounded rage and terror. "My function is at an end. . . . Wantonness and weakness are to engulf the world in the most terrible of wars, the ultimate aim of which is the ruin of Germany. For now I can no longer doubt it: England, France and Russia . . . have conspired . . . to fight together for our annihilation. . . . That is, in a nutshell, the naked truth of the situation which has been slowly and surely created by Edward VII. . . . The notorious encirclement of Germany is at last an accomplished fact. . . . All my warnings, all my prayers, have fallen on deaf ears. . . . My loyalty to the venerable Austrian emperor . . . has given England the pretext for annihilating us."

These were not the words of a man who had ever desired the reality of war. He was a tragic blusterer caught at last in the network of his own unrestrained braggadocio. He had threatened the allies, had even invaded Belgium to frighten them.



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But the allies, refusing to be frightened, had called his bluff.  
What scoundrels!

### V

"THE EMPEROR," wrote one of his generals, "never dared to face facts but entrenched himself in wishful fantasies. . . . The contrast between the masterful personality which he tried to assume and the absence of any real strength of character grew daily more glaring until the bitter end." Unopposed in his own nation, he could never understand why he should be opposed by any other nation. In spite of his invasion of Belgium he refused to shoulder the responsibility for the war. He saw no reason why the allies should have thwarted him in his ambition to find a place—the place—in the sun. Why, that was his prerogative, as the supreme leader of the supreme nation in the world. The other powers should have accepted this leadership of the Germans peacefully, just as the Germans accepted his own leadership peacefully. If they disputed his just claim to supremacy it was because they were warmongers. The whole world, he complained, had conspired against him. He was a broken man living in a child's dream. And like a petulant child, he was determined to get even—just how, he didn't know. All power of decision had left him. He concocted the most absurd plans for victory as he sat in his palace, miles from the front. He was only a mockery of the supreme war lord that his grandfather had been. "The emperor ought to go to France and be nearer the troops," complained one of his high officers. "He fails to comprehend the true gravity of the situation," was another criticism. "The chief mark of his character," observed a third, "is that he will make no decision, take no responsibility."

This fair-weather despot had become a nuisance to the very people who had worshiped him. Nominally he was head of the army and leader of his people. But it soon became apparent that the emperor would have to transfer all his authority into more

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capable and more courageous hands. "I see only one way out," wrote the admiral of the fleet. "The emperor must give out that he is ill for eight weeks or more." And then the command could be transferred to Hindenburg.

When a diplomat approached Wilhelm to bring him tidings from the battlefield his aide-de-camp would whisper, "You won't tell His Majesty anything but good news, will you?"

His people were dying by the hundreds of thousands in the trenches. But this emperor, who had tongue-tripped his nation into the war and who lacked the courage even to do evil, let alone good, must be pampered into receiving only the best of news. He traced the progress of the war on maps while the whole company around him fell asleep. He was very punctual about his meals, even when matters of the highest importance required his presence away from the dining table. He took walks over the battlefield of Sedan and romanticized over the War of 1870 when he was needed at the front in the War of 1914.

The man who had once referred to his will as the supreme law was now moved to remark during the course of a political discussion that it was useless for him to offer any suggestions. "For on all sides the emperor is ignored." Ignored, even despised, by his own people.

## VI

*Truth forever on the scaffold,  
Wrong forever on the throne.*

FOR A TIME the German forces marched triumphantly on. They swept the French army back to within a few miles of Paris, and it looked as if the French capital would be compelled to surrender as in 1870. But then came the Battle of the Marne, and Kaiser Wilhelm's military machine was stopped. For three and a half years the French army held the Germans at bay, while the British navy succeeded in blockading Germany. In vain the

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Germans introduced "new weapons of victory"—poison gas on land and submarines at sea. The allies held on. The Germans, threatened with slow starvation as a result of the British blockade, declared unrestricted submarine warfare and sank several neutral ships, including the liner *Lusitania*, with the loss of several hundred American lives. This total disregard of neutral rights at last drew the United States into the war. But the Kaiser still dreamed of victory. His army would yet conquer the world. And as late as the spring of 1918, it looked as if his dream would come true. Russia had collapsed, and the German commanders were able to transfer their eastern army to the western front. They launched a furious Blitzkrieg upon the allies. But it was the last gasp of a dying cause. The German resources were exhausted. In the early summer of 1918 the allies started a successful counterattack. In July they defeated the Germans at Château-Thierry; in August they turned the defeat into a rout, and in November they compelled the Germans to sue for peace.

The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. The Kaiser who was no real Kaiser, the leader who in the critical moments of history had to be led, was hurled from the throne where he had never really belonged. The compulsory abdication of the Kaiser was but the aftermath of the war which his reckless life had let loose upon the world. Having strutted about for sixty years in a role in which he had been pitifully miscast, he now made his silent exit at Doorn, Holland, where he settled down to iron out his differences with God.

**STALIN**

### *Important Dates in Life of Stalin*

- 1879—Born in Georgia.
- 1896—Joined Social Democratic revolutionaries.
- 1902—Imprisoned for organizing demonstrations and year later exiled to Siberia.
- 1904—Escaped and returned to participate in political activities, especially the abortive 1905 revolution.
- 1908-17—Several times arrested and exiled to Siberia—and each time escaped.
- 1912-13—Acted as one of the editors of the Bolshevik journals *Sviezda* and *Pravda*.
- 1917—Participated in Bolshevik revolution.
- 1919-20—Fought against Yudenitch, Denikin and Polish army.
- 1922—Appointed general secretary of Communist party.
- 1924—Succeeded Lenin as leader of Soviet Russia on the latter's death.
- 1928—Exiled Trotsky, his chief opponent.
- 1937—Began series of purge trials and court-martials.
- 1939—Entered into a non-aggression treaty with Germany.
- 1941—Began defense of Russia against German invasion.
- 1943—Turned tide of war against Germany at Stalingrad.
- 1943—Met with Roosevelt and Churchill at Teheran.
- 1945—Met with other members of the Big Three at Yalta and at Potsdam.
- 1945—Sent Molotov to the San Francisco Conference.
- 1946—Sent delegates to the first official assembly of the United Nations' Organization at London.

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# Joseph Stalin

1879—

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**J**OSEPH VISSARIONOVICH DJUGASHVILI is a native of the Caucasus, a wild and tempestuous country famous in ancient legend. It was in the Caucasus that the Titan Prometheus was said to have been chained to a rock for his daring rebellion in behalf of the human race. The Caucasian village of Didi-Lolo was a fit birthplace for the Titan of the twentieth century, the Russian Prometheus who was destined once more to fan the fires of human rebellion.

Sosso—the Russian diminutive for Joseph—was a taciturn, willful, yet generous youngster. He insisted upon his own rights and upon the rights of his playmates. His father, who was a cobbler, wanted him to follow the same trade. But his mother was determined to educate him for the priesthood. “Can’t you see that he has within him the makings of a spiritual leader?” She sent him to the Greek Orthodox Seminary at Tiflis, a city whose culture was a medley of Asiatic mysticism and European restlessness.

Out of this seething combination of medievalism and modernism, one definite force came bubbling to the surface,—the spirit

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of contradiction, discontentment, revolt. Young Sosso was caught up in the movement. He joined the Revolutionary party and was expelled from the seminary.

The leaders of the party found in him a good worker. For he was one of those youngsters, so rare in czarist Russia, who preferred action to talk. Firm in his determination to complete whatever job was assigned to him, he came to be known as the revolutionary who in his championship of the underdog was ready to use not only his tongue but, if need be, his fist. He had not as yet changed his family name of Djugashvili, but he already looked upon himself as the unbreakable sword of the local revolutionary movement. "Ya Stalin," he used to exclaim to his comrades. "I am the man of steel!"

He became a hunted man, traveling from place to place with the police always at his heels. Descriptions of him were posted up in all the public centers of Russia. "Height, a little over five feet. Appearance, ordinary. Hair, dark brown. Nose, straight and long. Forehead, straight but low. Face, long, swarthy and pock-marked. Special features: Second and third toes of left foot grown together; left arm slightly paralyzed."

In spite of his physical defects he had the strength—and the courage—of a young lion. When the party organized its Robin Hood bands of bank robbers—they called themselves *expropriators*, "men who took from the rich to give to the poor"—young Sosso was selected as the leader of one of these bands that operated in Tiflis and in the other cities of the Caucasus. For he was a man who hated the mighty and pitied the weak. Again and again, in the course of his revolutionary activities, he was arrested and exiled to Siberia. But always, owing to the inefficiency and the corruption of the police system under the czars, he managed to make his escape.

Yet thus far the government officials did not take him too seriously. They regarded him as "small fry." He was no small

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fry, however, to the leaders of the Revolutionary party. These men knew him for what he was—a fanatical and indefatigable “worker for the cause.” Nothing in the world would stop this determined young crusader. *Ya Stalin, I am the Man of Steel!*

## II

ON SUNDAY, January 22, 1905, two hundred thousand workingmen and workingwomen of St. Petersburg followed Father Gapon in a procession to the czar. Their peaceful object was to implore their “Little Father” to lighten the burdens of his children. The czar answered them with a cavalry charge and a machine-gun massacre that left thousands dead and wounded upon the snow. As a result of this massacre there was a general uprising in Russia. It was the moment for which the leaders of the Revolution, many of them in exile, had been waiting. Lenin, who was among the exiled, organized a Bolshevik conference at Tammerfors. It was at this conference that two of the young delegates made a profound impression upon Lenin: the first, with his capable intellect; the second, with his unbreakable will. These two young men were Trotsky and Stalin.

The Revolution of 1905 was too spontaneous, and therefore too ill organized, to prove a success. But out of it there emerged, in addition to Lenin, the two other striking personalities of Trotsky and Stalin. These two young men became co-workers and at the same time implacable rivals. While neither of them could dispute the supremacy of the older and far more experienced Lenin, each of them hoped nevertheless that he, and he alone, might someday have the good fortune to step into Lenin’s shoes.

This rivalry between the two young revolutionaries was more than merely personal. It was ideological. For each of them was motivated by a different sort of dream. Trotsky envisaged a



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revolution that would embrace the world. Stalin foresaw a job of emancipation for Russia alone—"and let the rest of the world take care of itself."

For nine years, from the abortive uprising of 1905 to the outbreak of the World War in 1914, Stalin continued his revolutionary activities in behalf of the Russian proletariat. Conferences, plans, "expropriations," arrests, escapes. Lenin became more and more impressed with Stalin's *Arbeitsfähigkeit*—his ability to work. Like a good soldier in the revolutionary ranks, Stalin asked no questions, uttered no complaints, and carried out all assignments with precision and dispatch.

The infirmity in Stalin's left arm exempted him from military service. Indeed, the World War resulted in an enforced vacation on his part. For the mobilization of the army had stifled all revolutionary tendencies among the masses. But when the Russian military machine collapsed in 1917, the masses once again, as in 1905, suddenly and spontaneously broke into revolution. This time the army was on their side; and the revolution, in spite of the fact that it had "taken the revolutionaries by surprise," was crowned with success. Lenin, older now and more experienced than in 1905, was quick to take the reins out of Kerensky's feeble grasp into his own firm hands. He came to Moscow and summoned to his side the two ablest "comrades" among the younger members of his party—Trotsky and Stalin.

Lenin was primarily a statesman; Trotsky, a revolutionist; Stalin, a builder. Lenin counted upon his two faithful companions—Trotsky, the firebrand that would destroy; Stalin, the hammer that would restore. Both of them at that moment were necessary to his plans. Tear down the old, build up the new.

But the process of tearing down and rebuilding was greater than Lenin, with all his astute statesmanship, had anticipated. Lenin was an idealist who had undertaken a task beyond his powers—beyond any human powers. He had hoped, by a single authoritative command, to transform a monarchy into a democ-

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racy. But he soon realized his mistake, and he was frank enough to admit it. Theoretically he had believed in the freedom of the press. "As soon as the revolution is consolidated," he asserted, "complete liberty of the press will be established." In actual practice, however, he found himself compelled to stifle every free expression of opinion. For, as he discovered only too late, revolution means violence—*prolonged* violence. That which is forcibly acquired must be forcibly defended. "Men do not lead revolutions," he confessed. "Revolutions lead men." However, he promised—and Lenin was sincere in his promises—that at the first possible opportunity he would lay aside his dictatorship and establish a genuine democracy in Russia. This idea of a Russian democracy, as we can see from his writings, was always uppermost in his mind. It was the idea which he tried to impress upon all his followers. Dictatorship was to be but an intermediary stage between the tyranny of the past and the freedom of the future. The freedom of a true and democratic communism of equal men.

Lenin's ideal—and in this respect Stalin was a fanatical follower of Lenin—was to establish for the masses of Russia a new heaven on earth. Communism for them had assumed the character of a true religion. Lenin appointed Stalin, his most ardent disciple, to the secretaryship of the Communist party. And Stalin, faithful, methodical, his mind unswervingly fixed upon a single aim, set himself to the task of building "the new heaven" for the Russian common man. When Lenin died (January 21, 1924) the Soviet Congress issued a public declaration in which he was raised almost to the status of a god. "His vision"—so ran the statement—"was colossal; his intelligence in organizing the masses was beyond belief. He was the supreme leader of all countries, of all times, and of all peoples. He was the lord of the new humanity, the savior of the world."

And now that Lenin was gone, his mantle fell upon the shoulders of his faithful disciple. But Stalin's ambition was more

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modest than that of his master. He entertained no desire to save the world. He wanted merely to rebuild Russia.

### III

STALIN accomplished a remarkable feat of rebuilding. "I have been much impressed with what I have seen in the Soviet Union," writes Joseph E. Davies in his *Mission to Moscow*. "It was extraordinary to see the Soviet Union attempt to accomplish within five or six years in the field of industrialization what it has taken the United States several generations to accomplish." In his effort to industrialize Russia upon a basis of the greatest prosperity for the greatest number, Stalin encountered two sorts of serious obstacles: distrust from without, enmity from within.

The external critics of Stalin may be roughly divided into three groups: those who hate communism in general; those who suspect Stalin in particular; and those who, though not unfriendly either to communism or to Stalin, nevertheless disapprove of his methods.

To those who hate the idea of communism, every Soviet leader is a devil's disciple. Stalin, as seen across the mists of partisan propaganda, is an anti-Christ who is trying to overthrow all the political and social and religious traditions of a civilized world. These anti-communists, whether through ignorant prejudice or through sincere conviction, are determined that the human race cannot resume its forward march of progress until Stalinism is overthrown. The unprejudiced observer, in his effort to evaluate his experiment, will try neither to condemn nor to praise, but to understand.

It is hard to understand the Russian experiment because we are too close to it to get a proper perspective. It is even harder to understand the character of Stalin because we are too far away from him to get any perspective at all. "The silent man of the Kremlin" keeps himself too much aloof from the rest of

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the world. He rarely consents to an interview. He is too distrustful of the so-called "capitalistic nations" to expect the capitalistic nations to be any too trustful of him. As a result of this suspicious aloofness, he has allowed all sorts of ugly legends to spring up around his strange personality. He has been pictured as a ruthless tyrant motivated by a single ambition—his own advancement at whatever cost. On the other hand, we get an entirely different picture of him through the eyes of Mr. Davies. When the American ambassador met him—it was one of those all-too-rare occasions when Stalin showed himself to a non-Russian—he was surprised to find in this "mysterious ogre" a man with a kindly and gentle smile. "A child would like to sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him." As for Stalin's reputed intolerance of all religion, it is interesting to note that his own wife lies buried within the holy ground of the Novodyevichi—the Monastery of the New Virgins.

There are those, however, who are neither prejudiced against Stalin nor unfriendly to his cause—sympathizers who look with favor upon his theories but with misgiving upon his practices. These friendly critics are disturbed by the manner in which he is trying to bring about his Utopia. They disagree with his efforts to *liberate* humanity by *enslaving* it. They feel that no salvation can come to the world through the suppression of free speech and free thought. They admit Stalin's sincerity, but they dislike his severity.

To all these objections the partisan admirers of Stalin have a ready answer. "Revolutionary ends," they maintain, "require drastic means." Having dedicated himself to the faith that the only salvation for Russia lies in the communist state, Stalin must stop at nothing in his effort to remove every obstacle against the perpetuation of this state.

And, continue the advocates of Stalin's policy, the events of the last few years have proved not only the fairness but the wisdom of his acts. They refer especially to the purge trials of

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1937 and 1938. At these trials a number of men who held a high position in the Soviet government—former friends and comrades who had fought side by side with Stalin in the early days of the Revolution—were condemned and executed as saboteurs. A wave of horror swept over the world at the news of these executions. Stalin was accused of ingratitude, bestiality, cynicism, selfishness and fraud. It was alleged that he had trumped up the charges of sabotage against his colleagues in order that he might get them out of the way and rule supreme over Russia. A number of the accused men confessed that they had conspired with Germany and with Japan to invade Russia and to overthrow the Soviet government. But the critics of Stalin insisted that these confessions had been “dragged” out of the victims either through the administration of drugs that beclouded their judgment or through the threat of reprisals against their families if they refused to admit their guilt. To be sure, the foreign correspondents who attended the trials were of the opinion that the accused men had been proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Yet the shadow of suspicion still hung ominously over Stalin up to the time of Hitler’s attack against Russia. And then the world was astonished to find that there were in Russia no fifth columnists ready to betray their country to the enemy. “All our fifth columnists,” observed Stalin simply, “have been liquidated in the purge.”

### IV

ON AUGUST 22, 1939, Stalin precipitated a bombshell in the highly explosive international situation of that eventful year. For on that day he concluded a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. Yet here, too, the subsequent events helped to explain the motives that led Stalin to his amazing act. This alliance gave Russia a breathing spell, enabled Stalin to strengthen his defenses, and may have largely contributed—such are the strange

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twistings in the complicated thread of history—to the epic of heroism which Russia was able to offer to the cause of the United Nations after Hitler had violated his treaty with Stalin and invaded Russia.

### V

WHEN Hitler invaded Russia, Stalin became the personification of a mighty epic. All factionalism within his country had stopped. Russia was a united army devoted to a single cause—victory over the Nazis. And the free nations of the world looked on and applauded and hoped. It was not to the Russians alone but to all aspiring peoples everywhere that Stalin spoke on July 3, 1941:

“. . . Is it really true that German Fascist troops are invincible, as is ceaselessly trumpeted by boastful propagandists? Of course not!

“. . . History shows that there are no invincible armies, and never have been. Napoleon's army was defeated . . . Kaiser Wilhelm's army was defeated . . . Hitler's army, too, can be smashed and will be smashed as were the armies of Napoleon and of Wilhelm.

“. . . Our resistance to the enemy is growing in strength and power. Side by side with the Red Army, the entire Russian people is rising to liberate our native land.

“. . . In this war of liberation we shall not be alone. In this great war we shall have loyal allies in the peoples of Europe and America . . . Our war for the freedom of our country will merge with the struggle of all the peoples of Europe and America for their independence, for democratic liberties. It will be a united front standing for freedom and against enslavement.

“. . . Forward, all the forces of the people—for the demolition of the enemy! Forward, to the building of our victory!”

Before the Germans yielded to Stalin's prophecy they destroyed six million buildings in Russia, set fire to seventy thou-

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sand villages and drove five million people from their homes. For twenty-four months of warfare they kept the Red armies on the run and nearly wiped out the industrial heart of western Russia, including the cities of Sevastopol, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, Smolensk, Kharkov and Rostov on the Don. The turning point in the fighting was reached, however, in February, 1943, when the resilient Soviets annihilated the picked troops of Hitler at Stalingrad after six months of bitter battle. The Red Army—with the aid of munitions and supplies from its Western Allies—then launched a series of offensives “from the grave.” Leningrad was freed; the Crimea was regained; the Wehrmacht was hurled from the Ukraine. Victories caught onto victories like a contagion. The Finns, allies of Hitler, were smashed on the Karelian front; Rumania and Bulgaria were brought to their knees and compelled to declare war on Germany. The Russians lunged into Hungary.

Eighteen months after the victory at Stalingrad, the Soviet troops entered German soil in East Prussia (August, 1944). Five months later Warsaw fell. Three weeks afterwards the Soviets rolled across the Oder River. Ten weeks after that, nine Russian armies, numbering more than two and a half million men, hammered into the eastern approaches of Berlin. The German capital collapsed on May 2, 1945.

Russia received a handsome reward for the part she played in the war. She extended her western frontier to the Oder River, incorporating a generous portion of eastern Poland. She annexed Königsberg, the capital city of East Prussia, and thereby gained a good, ice-free port in the Baltic. She regained her rule over Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia, took Petsamo from Finland, the Carpathian Ukraine from Czechoslovakia and part of Moldavia from Rumania.

Three months after V-E Day in Europe, and just prior to Hirohito's unconditional surrender, Stalin entered the war against Japan. And the price he exacted for his entry was that Russia

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would have title to the Kurile Islands (stepping stones to Japan) and to all of Sakhalin Island, the northern half of which she already held; and, furthermore, that the interests of Russia would be reëstablished in Port Arthur and in Port Darien.

For his part, Stalin showed a willingness to get together with the leaders of the outside world and to plan with them a course of action for a common goal. He sat down at the table with the chiefs of the leading democracies in the west and talked things over—something Russia had not done in the twenty-four years following the establishment of the communist régime. In December, 1943, when the war had reached its most critical hour, Stalin met with Churchill and Roosevelt at Teheran to map out joint blows against the German armies. Then, in February, 1945, on the eve of victory, he met the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of England at Yalta, in the Crimea, and pledged to coöperate with them not only in finishing the war, but in solving the problems of peace.

A step toward this solution was taken when Russia sent to the convention at San Francisco a delegation whose business it was to draft a charter for a new world organization—the United Nations of peace-loving peoples. Russian delegates sat at the bargaining table on other notable occasions; at Potsdam, to frame the terms of an armistice with Germany; at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in London and in Moscow during the fall and the winter of 1945. At the first official assembly of the United Nations' Organization in 1946, the Kremlin took an active part in the attempt to iron out a policy for the guidance of the affairs of the world.

Serious differences developed between Stalin and the western democracies as to just how the world should be directed into the paths of peace. There was a clash between communism and democracy among the peoples along the perimeter of Soviet influence, in the Balkan and the Mediterranean countries, in China and in the countries of the Middle East. Russia and her neigh-



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bors once again, as before the war, bristled into mutual suspicions and accusations. In one of his post-war speeches, Stalin sounded his recurrent Marxist theme: "The Soviet social system has proved to be more capable of life and more stable than a non-Soviet social system; it is a better form of organization of society."

There are some folk both in Russia and in the democracies who are convinced of Kipling's philosophy that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." Yet there are others, perhaps in the majority, who entertain the optimistic conviction that the world is large enough for those who differ peacefully, if only those who differ will learn to trust and respect one another.

### VI

WHATEVER the non-Russians might think of Stalin, in Russia he was regarded, even before the war, as the Great Builder. "He transformed a wilderness into a garden of plenty for the common man." At the twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, "many babies and small children were carried on the shoulders of parents to catch a glimpse of Uncle Joseph." Uncle Joseph, we are told, was as modest in the presence of adulation as he was tireless in the performance of his duties.

To his war-weary people he preached (in February, 1946) a new Five-Year Plan to raise the standard of living among the Russians, to develop scientific research and to expand the output of steel ultimately to a point equal to America's output. Once more he implored his ever-worshipful followers to trudge with him a little further, promising that he would lead them at last into the land of milk and honey. And the Russian people, apparently, were ready to follow this able, uncompromising and fanatical leader of the communist religion wherever he might lead them. "There is no God but Lenin," they affirmed, "and Stalin is his prophet."



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