

The Founder of the Old French Empire.

"À lui finit la dissolution de ancien monde, à lui commence l'edification du monde moderne."—Lavalée.

AT the present time when German professors are striving earnestly to impress their hearers with the fact that the Great Charlemagne was a German and the proto-type of the present Wilhelm, it is well for us to recall some of the exploits of that illustrious hero.

The wars and conquests of Charlemagne were many and glorious, but the most bitter and cruel was that with the Saxon Germans. For thirty long years the war was waged with the greatest carnage and in the end the Franks triumphed.

But the end might have been reached much sooner says Eigenhard had it not been for the perfidy of these Saxons, who, like their descendants of the present day, did not scruple to tear up their treaties when they thought they could do so with impunity.

Charlemagne forced the Saxons to abandon the worship of Oden and Thor and to submit to the Church and to him as her protector. Of course conversion at the point of the sword may not be altogether in keeping with our ethical standards, but this was a contest between Christian civilization and stubborn barbarity, rather than a question of theological dogma. But whether or not the present inhabitants of Germany indulge in actions more suited to votaries of Thor and Oden than to worshippers of the Prince of Peace, I shall not venture to decide.

The wars of Charlemagne lasted for the space of forty seven years and during this time he subdued the Huns, Avars, Bavarians, Bohemians, and the Wiltzi. Yet one more conquest did he make when he proceeded against Desiderio, King of the Lombards, and his coming is best described in the words of Longfellow :—

" And Olger answered : ' When he shall appear,
 You will behold what manner of man he is ;
 But what will then befall us I know not.
 Then came the guard that never knew repose,
 The Paladins of France ; and at the sight
 The Lombard King o'ercome with terror cried :
 ' This must be Charlemagne ! ' and as before
 Did Olger answer : ' No not yet, not yet.'

" And Olger said :
 ' When you behold the harvests in the fields
 Shaking with fear, the Po and the Ticino
 Lashing the city walls with iron waves,
 Then may you know that Charlemagne is come.'
 And even as he spake, in the northwest,
 Lo ! there uprose a black and threatening cloud,
 Out of whose bosom flashed the light of arms
 Upon the people pent up in the city ;
 A light more terrible than any darkness ;
 And Charlemagne appeared :—a Man of Iron."

In Charlemagne's position war was inevitable. Wedged in as he was between the barbarians of Germany on one side, and on the other by highly civilized Saracen Moors—sons and grandsons of those fierce invaders who, a little more than half a century previously, had been overthrown in the battle of Poitiers by Charlemagne's great ancestor Charles Martel—he had either to conquer or be conquered.

In 800 he was crowned Emperor by the Pope with great pomp and ceremony. The title brought with it neither lands nor wealth, but it had great significance among European princes and the Greeks regarded him as the ruler of a revived Western Empire.

He did a great deal towards organizing the Church throughout his Empire and besides being a hero in the eyes of his countrymen he has merited the gratitude of all Christians.

The Germans base their claim to Charlemagne on the fact that the Holy Roman Empire later became a union of German states. But it is Austria not Prussia that is the true and only representative of the old imperialism and on no account can we confound the two. The Austrians were saviours of the West and of Christianity ere the heathen Prussians had emerged from the obscurity of their Pomeranian forests.

Charlemagne was the patron of science, letters and jurisprudence; and it is marvellous how he, engaged in almost incessant warfare, could find time to supervise personally the administration of a kingdom composed of as many races as modern Austria, and to construct a legislative code, admired to the present day under the title of "Capitularies of Charlemagne." He founded and endowed many schools and secured eminent professors for them. He collected a very large library which, at his death, he bequeathed for circulation among scholars.

He died in 814 in the seventy-first year of his age and the forty-seventh of his reign, beloved by his subjects and recognized by all as the champion of Western civilization.

Eginhard, his friend and contemporary speaks of his achievements as being "of a great and deservedly glorious memory—deeds which men of later times will scarcely be able to imitate."

At the present time European civilization, because of another irruption of German barbarians, is in danger as grave if not graver than that in which it was at the time of Charlemagne. And just as he, by considering the attainments and ideals of ancient Greek and Roman conquerors and legislators, fortified his mind and energies, so may we, by considering his attainments and ideals fortify our minds regarding the ultimate triumph of Christianity.

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It is more advantageous not to know than to know the evils that are coming upon us.

A crow's na whiter for being washed.