

the dynamic nature of European history of this period. There are great rulers and great men in India and China and a high degree of culture, but, and especially so in India, the masses seem to be spiritless and passive. They put up with changes of rulers without any great objection. They seem to have been broken in, and have become too much used to obedience to challenge authority. Thus their history, though interesting occasionally, is more a record of events and rulers than of popular movements. I am not sure how far this is true of China; but of India it certainly has been true for many hundred years. And all the ills that have come to India during this period have been due to this unhappy condition of our people.

Another tendency to be noticed in India is the desire to look back and not forward; to the heights we once occupied and not to the heights we hope to occupy. And so our people sighed for the past, and, instead of getting a move on, obeyed anyone who chose to order them about. Ultimately empires rest not so much on their strength as on the servility of the people over whom they dominate.

## THE RENAISSANCE

August 5, 1932

Out of the turmoil and travail that were spreading all over Europe rose the fine flower of the Renaissance. It grew in the soil of Italy first, but it looked across the centuries to old Greece for inspiration and nourishment. From Greece it took its love of beauty, and added to the beauty of bodily form something that was deeper, that came from the mind and was of the spirit. It was an urban growth, and the cities of northern Italy gave shelter to it. In particular, Florence was the home of the early Renaissance.

Florence had already produced, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Dante and Petrarch, the two great poets of the Italian language. During the Middle Ages it was for a long time the financial capital of Europe, where the big money-lenders congregated. It was a little republic of rich and not very admirable people, who often ill-treated their own great men. "Fickle Florence", it has been called. But, in spite of the

money-lenders and the despots and tyrants, this city produced, in the second half of the fifteenth century, three remarkable men: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael. All three of them were very great artists and painters; Leonardo and Michelangelo were great in other directions also. Michelangelo was a wonderful sculptor, hewing mighty figures out of the solid marble; and he was a great architect, and the mighty Cathedral of St. Peter's in Rome was largely fashioned by him. He lived to a tremendous age—nearly ninety—and almost to his dying day he laboured at St. Peter's. He was an unhappy man, always seeking for something behind the surface of things, always thinking, always attempting amazing tasks. "One paints with his head, not with his hands," he once said.

Leonardo was the oldest of the three, and in many ways the most wonderful. Indeed, he was the most remarkable man of his age, and, remember, it was an age which produced many great men. A very great painter and sculptor, he was also a great thinker and scientist. Always experimenting, always probing, and trying to find out the reason for things, he was the first of the great scientists that have laid the foundations of modern science. "Kindly nature," he said, "sees to it that you may find something to learn everywhere in the world." He was a self-taught man, and began teaching himself Latin and mathematics at the age of thirty. He became a great engineer also, and he was the first to discover that blood circulated through the body. He was fascinated by the structure of the body. "Coarse people," he said, "of bad habits and shallow judgments do not deserve so beautiful an instrument, such a complex anatomical equipment, as the human body. They should merely have a sack for taking in food and letting it out again, for they are nothing but an alimentary canal!" He was himself a vegetarian, and was very fond of animals. A habit of his was to buy caged birds in the market and set them free immediately.

Most amazing of all were Leonardo's attempts at aviation or flying in the air. He did not succeed, but he went a good way towards success. There was no one to follow up his theories and experiments. Perhaps if there had been a couple of Leonardos to follow him, the modern aeroplane might have been invented 200 or 300 years ago. This strange and wonderful man lived from 1452 to 1519. His life, it is said, "was a dialogue with Nature". He was always asking questions, and trying to find answers to them by experiment; he seemed to be ever reaching forward, trying to grasp the future.

I have written about these three men of Florence, and especially

about Leonardo, because he is a favourite of mine. The history of the republic of Florence is not very pleasant or edifying, with its intrigues and despots and knavish rulers. But much may be forgiven Florence—we may excuse even her money-lenders!—because of the great men she has produced. The shadow of these great sons of hers lies on her still, and as you pass the streets of this beautiful city, or look at the lovely Arno as it flows by under the medieval bridges, an enchantment seems to come over you, and the past becomes vivid and alive. Dante goes by, and Beatrice, the lady he loved, passes, leaving faint perfume trailing behind her. And Leonardo seems to march along the narrow streets, lost in thought, pondering over the mysteries of life and Nature.

So the Renaissance flowered in Italy from the fifteenth century, and gradually travelled to other Western countries. Great artists tried to put life in stone and canvas, and the galleries and museums of Europe are full of their paintings and sculptures. In Italy there was a decline in the artistic renaissance by the end of the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century Holland produced great painters, one of the most famous being Rembrandt, and in Spain about this time there was Velasquez. But I shall not mention more names. There are so many of them. If you are interested in the great master-painters, go to the galleries and look at their works. Their names are of little account; it is their art and the beauty they created that have a message for us.

During this period—the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries—science also gradually forges ahead and comes into its own. It had a stiff fight with the Church, for the Church did not believe in making people think and experiment. For it the earth was the centre of the universe and the sun went round it and the stars were fixed points in the heavens. Anyone who said otherwise was a heretic and might be dealt with by the Inquisition. In spite of this a Pole, named Copernicus, did challenge this belief and proved that the earth went round the sun. Thus he laid the foundations of the modern idea of the universe. He lived from 1473 to 1543. Somehow he managed to escape the wrath of the Church for his revolutionary and heretical opinions. Others who came after him were not so fortunate. Giordano Bruno, an Italian, was burned in Rome by the Church in 1600 for insisting that the earth went round the sun, and the stars were themselves suns. A contemporary of his, Galileo, who made the telescope, was also threatened by the Church, but he was weaker than Bruno, and thought it more expedient to recant. So he admitted to the Church that he was mistaken in his folly and that the earth was of course the centre of the universe, and the sun went round

it. Even so, he had to spend some time in prison doing penance.

Among the prominent men of science in the sixteenth century was Harvey, who finally proved the circulation of the blood. In the seventeenth century comes one of the greatest names in science—Isaac Newton, who was a great mathematician. He discovered what is called the law of gravitation—of how things fall—and thus wrested another of Nature's secrets.

So much, or rather so little, for science. Literature also forged ahead during this period. The new spirit that was abroad affected the young European languages powerfully. These languages had existed for some time, and we have seen that Italy had already produced great poets. In England there had been Chaucer. But Latin, the speech and language of the learned and of the Church all over Europe, overshadowed them all. They were the vulgar tongues—the vernaculars, as many people very curiously call the Indian languages still. It was almost undignified to write in them. But the new spirit, and paper and printing, pushed these languages ahead. Italian was the first in the field; then followed French and English and Spanish and, last of all, German. In France a band of young writers in the sixteenth century resolved to write in their own language and not in Latin, and to improve their "vulgar tongue" till it became a suitable medium for the best of literature.

So the languages of Europe progressed and gained in richness and power till they became the fine languages they are today. I shall not mention the names of many famous writers; I shall give just a few. In England there was the famous Shakespeare from 1564 to 1616; and immediately following him in the seventeenth century was Milton, the blind poet of *Paradise Lost*. In France there were the philosopher Descartes and the dramatist, Molière, both in the seventeenth century. Molière was the founder of the Comédie Française, the great State theatre in Paris. A contemporary of Shakespeare in Spain was Cervantes, who wrote *Don Quixote*.

One other name I shall mention, not because of its greatness, but because it is well known. This is Machiavelli, another Florentine. He was just an ordinary politician in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, but he wrote a book, called *The Prince*, which became famous. This book gives us a glimpse into the minds of the princes and politicians of the day. Machiavelli tells us that religion is necessary for a government—not, mind you, to make people virtuous, but to help to govern them and keep them down. It may even be the duty of the ruler to support a religion which he believes to be false! "A prince," says Machiavelli, "must

know how to play at once man and beast, lion and fox. He neither should nor can keep his word when to do so will turn against him . . . I venture to maintain that it is very disadvantageous always to be honest; useful on the other hand, to appear pious and faithful, humane and devout. Nothing is more useful than the appearance of virtue."

Pretty bad, is it not? The greater the scoundrel, the better the prince! If this was the state of an average prince's mind in those days in Europe, it is not surprising that there was continuous trouble there. But why go so far back? Even today the imperialist Powers behave much like the prince of Machiavelli. Beneath the appearance of virtue, there is greed and cruelty and unscrupulousness; beneath the kid glove of civilization there is the red claw of the beast.

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## THE PROTESTANT REVOLT AND THE PEASANTS' WAR

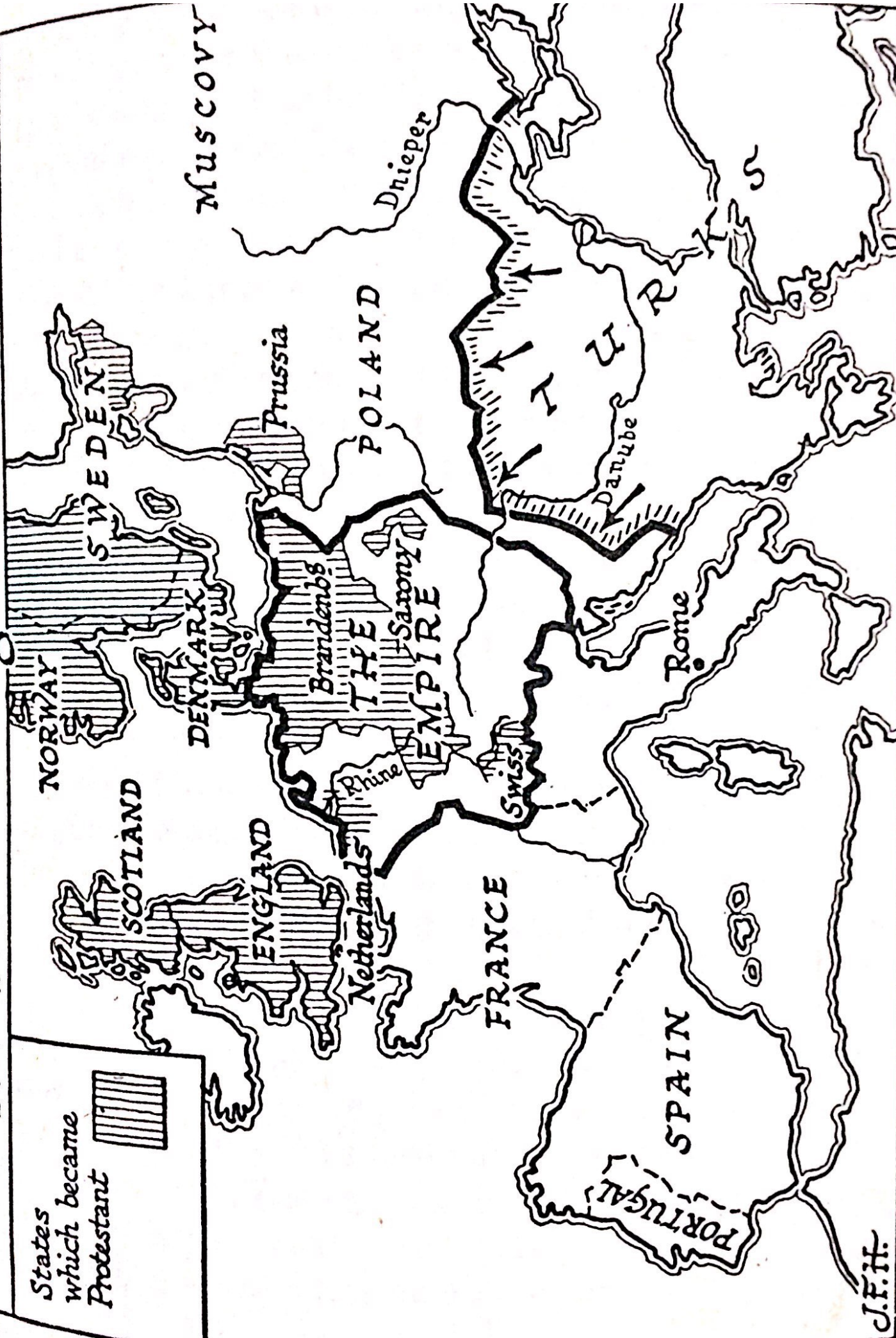
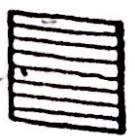
August 8, 1932

I have written several letters to you already about Europe during the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. I have told you something about the passing of the Middle Ages, and the great distress of the peasantry, and the rise of the *bourgeoisie*, and the discovery of America and the seaways to the East, and the progress of art, and science, and the languages of Europe. But much still remains to be told about this period to complete the outlines of the picture. Remember that my last two letters, as well as the one about the sea-routes, and this one that I am writing, and perhaps one or two others to follow, deal with the same period in Europe. I write separately about different movements and activities, but they took place more or less at the same time, and each influenced the other.

Even before the times of the Renaissance there had been rumblings in the body of the Roman Church. Both the princes and peoples of Europe were beginning to feel the heavy hand of the Church, and to grumble a little, and to doubt. Frederick II, the Emperor, you will remember, had quite an argument with the Pope, and cared little even for excommunication. These signs of doubt and disobedience angered Rome, and it resolved to crush the new heresy. For this purpose the

# The REVOLTI against ROME

States which became Protestant



J.F.H.

Inquisition was created, and there was the burning of unhappy men who were styled heretics, and women who were accused of being witches, all over Europe. John Huss of Prague was tricked and burnt, and thereupon his followers in Bohemia, the Hussites, raised the banner of revolt. Not all the terrors of the Inquisition could put down this new spirit of revolt against the Roman Church. It spread, and to it was added, no doubt, the feeling of the peasantry against the Church as a big landowner. And the princes in many places encouraged this spirit for selfish reasons. They were casting envious and covetous eyes on the vast properties of the Church. The printing of books and Bibles added to the smouldering fire.

Early in the sixteenth century there rose in Germany Martin Luther, who was to become the great leader of the revolt against Rome. He was a Christian priest who after a visit to Rome became disgusted with the corruption and luxury of the Church. This controversy grew and grew till it split up the Roman Church into two, and divided western Europe into two camps, religious as well as political. The old orthodox Greek Church of Russia and eastern Europe kept apart from this controversy. So far as it was concerned Rome was itself far removed from the true faith.

In this way began the Protestant revolt. It was called Protestant because it *protested* against various dogmas of the Roman Church. Ever since then there have been two main divisions of Christianity in western Europe—Roman Catholic and Protestant. But the Protestants are divided up into many sects.

This movement against the Church is called the Reformation. It was in the main a popular revolt against corruption as well as the authoritarianism of the Church. Side by side with this, many princes wanted to put an end to all attempts by the Pope to dominate over them. They resented very much the interference of the Pope in their political affairs. There was also a third phase of the Reformation, an attempt by loyal Churchmen to reform the Church of its abuses from within.

You will perhaps remember the two orders of the Church—the Franciscan and the Dominican. In the sixteenth century, just about the time Martin Luther was gaining in strength, a new Church order was started by a Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola. He called it the "Society of Jesus", and its members were called Jesuits. I have already referred to the Jesuits visiting China and the East. This "Order of Jesus" was a very remarkable society. It aimed at training people for efficient and whole-

time service of the Roman Church and the Pope. It gave a hard training, and so successful was this, that it produced remarkably efficient and faithful servants of the Church. So faithful were they to the Church, that they obeyed it blindly and without questioning, and they gave their all to it. Where the Church stood to gain by it, they would sacrifice themselves willingly to it; indeed, they have had a reputation of being wholly without scruple in the service of the Church. The good of the Church justified and excused everything.

This remarkable body of men was of the greatest help to the Roman Church. Not only did they carry its name and message to distant lands, but they raised the standard of the Church in Europe. Partly on account of the internal movement for reform, and largely because of the menace of the Protestant revolt, there was much less corruption in Rome. Thus the Reformation split the Church into two and at the same time reformed it internally to some extent.

As the Protestant revolt developed some of the kings and princes of Europe sided with one party, some with the other. Religious motives had little to do with this. It was mostly a question of politics and the desire for gain. The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire at that time was Charles V, a Hapsburg. Owing to the marriages of his father and grandfather, he happened to inherit a large empire which included Austria, Germany (nominally), Spain, Naples and Sicily, the Netherlands and Spanish America. It was a favourite method in Europe in those days, this way of adding to one's dominions by marriage. Thus Charles, for no merit of his own, happened to rule over half Europe, and for a while he seemed to be a great man. He decided to side with the Pope against the Protestants. The idea of the Reformation was not in keeping with the idea of empire. But many of the smaller German princes sided with the Protestants, and there were two factions throughout Germany—the Roman and the Lutheran. This naturally resulted in civil war in Germany.

In England the much-married Henry VIII went against the Pope and favoured the Protestants, or rather himself. He coveted the property of the Church and, after breaking with Rome, he confiscated all the rich lands of the abbeys and monasteries and the churches. A personal reason for his break with the Pope was because he wanted to divorce his wife, and marry another woman.

In France the position was peculiar. The Chief Minister of the King was the famous Cardinal Richelieu, who practically ruled the kingdom. Richelieu kept France on the side of Rome and Pope and crushed Protestantism there. But, such are the intrigues of politics, he encouraged



Protestantism in Germany so that there might be civil war there and Germany might become weak and disunited! The antagonism of France and Germany to each other runs like a thread through the history of Europe.

Luther was the great Protestant, and he opposed the authority of Rome. But do not imagine that he was tolerant in religion. He was as intolerant as the Pope he was fighting. So the Reformation did not bring religious liberty to Europe. It bred a new type of fanatic—the puritan and the Calvinist. Calvin was one of the later leaders of the Protestant movement. He was a good organizer, and for a while he controlled the city of Geneva. Do you remember the great monument to the Reformation in the park at Geneva? The huge expanse of wall with statues of Calvin and others? Calvin was so intolerant that he burnt many persons because they simply did not agree with him and were free thinkers.

Luther and the Protestants were helped greatly by the mass of the people because there was a strong feeling against the Roman Church. As I have told you, the peasantry were very miserable and there were frequent riots. These riots developed into a regular Peasants' War in Germany. The poor peasants rose against the evil system which crushed them and demanded the most ordinary and reasonable rights—that serfdom should cease, and the right to fish and hunt. But even these were denied them, and the princes of Germany tried to crush them with every species of barbarity. And Luther, the great reformer, what was his attitude? Did he side with the poor peasants and support their just demands? Not he! On the peasants' demand that serfdom should end, Luther, said: "This article would make all men equal and so change the spiritual kingdom of Christ into an external worldly one. Impossible! An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects." He curses the peasants and calls for their destruction.

Therefore let all who are able hew them down, slaughter and stab them, openly or in secret, and remember that there is nothing more poisonous, noxious and utterly diabolical than a rebel. You must kill him as you would a mad dog; if you do not fall upon him, he will fall upon you and the whole land.

Pretty language this, especially coming from a religious leader and a reformer.

So one sees that all the talk of freedom and liberty was meant for the upper classes only, not for the masses. The masses had lived, almost in every age, a life not far removed from that of the animals. They must continue to do so, according to Luther, because that was laid down by Heaven. The Protestant revolt against Rome had been largely caused by the great economic distress of the people. It had fitted in with it and had utilized it. But when it was feared that the serfs might go too far and gain their freedom from serfdom—this was a little enough thing—the Protestant leaders joined the princes in crushing them. The day of the masses was still far distant. The new age that was dawning was the age of the middle classes, the *bourgeoisie*. From all the conflicts and wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one can see this class, almost inevitably, rising step by step.

Wherever this rising *bourgeoisie* was fairly strong, there Protestantism spread. There were many kinds and sects of Protestants. In England the King made himself the head of the Church—the “Defender of the Faith”—and the Church practically ceased to be a Church and became just a department of the government. The Church of England has continued to be so ever since.

In other countries, especially in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, other sects grew in prominence. Calvinism spread because it was in keeping with the growth of the *bourgeoisie*. In religious matters Calvin was terribly intolerant. There was torture and burning for the heretics, and the strictest discipline of the faithful. But in business matters his teaching was more in keeping with growing trade and industry, which the Roman teaching was not. Profits in business were blessed, and credit was encouraged. So the new *bourgeoisie* adopted this new version of the old faith and, with a perfectly easy conscience, went on making money. They had utilized the masses in their fights against the feudal nobles. Now, having triumphed over the nobles, they ignored or sat upon the masses.

But the *bourgeoisie* had to face many obstacles yet. There was the king still in the way. The king had joined with the men of the town in fighting the nobles. Now that the nobles had been reduced to powerlessness, the king was much stronger, and he seemed to be master of the field. The contest between him and the middle classes was yet to come.

AUTOCRACY IN SIXTEENTH- AND  
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

August 26, 1932

I have again been very negligent. It is long since I wrote these letters. There is none to question me or keep me up to the mark, and so I slacken occasionally and busy myself with other things. If we were together it would be different, would it not? But why should I write then, if you and I could talk to each other?

My last letters to you were about Europe at a time of great turmoil and change. They dealt with the great changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the changes that came with or followed the economic revolution which put an end to the Middle Ages and raised up the *bourgeoisie*. In our last letter we saw Christendom in western Europe breaking up into two factions—Catholic and Protestant. Germany was the special battle-ground of the religious struggles between these two factions because the two parties were more or less evenly balanced. The other countries of western Europe were also involved to some extent in these struggles. England kept apart from the continental religious struggle. Under her king, Henry VIII, she cut herself off from Rome without much internal disturbance, and established a Church of her own which was something between the Catholic and the Protestant. Henry cared little for religion. He wanted the Church lands, and he got them; and he wanted to marry again, and he did so. Thus the main result of the Reformation was to free the kings and princes from the leading-strings of the Pope.

While these movements of the Renaissance and Reformation and the economic turmoil were changing the face of Europe, what was the political background like? What was the map of Europe like in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? It was, of course, a changing map during these 200 years. Let us then look at the map as it was early in the sixteenth century.

In the south-east the Turks hold Constantinople and their empire advances into Hungary. In the south-west corner the Muslim Saracens, descendants of the Arab conquerors, have been driven away from Granada, and Spain has emerged as a Christian Power under the joint rule of

Ferdinand and Isabella. The long centuries of conflict between Christian and Muslim in Spain have made the Spaniard cling to his Catholic religion passionately and with bigotry. It is in Spain that the terrible Inquisition is established. Under the glamour of the discovery of America and the wealth that this is bringing her, Spain is beginning to play a leading part in European politics.

Look at the map again. We recognize England and France, much as they are now. In the centre of the map is the Empire, divided up into many German States, each of which was more or less independent. It is a curious collection of little States under princes, dukes, bishops, electors and such-like persons. There are also many towns with special privileges, and the northern commercial towns have joined up and formed a confederation. Then there is the republic of Switzerland, in fact free, but not yet formally recognized to be so; the republic of Venice, and also other city-republics in northern Italy; the territory belonging to the Popes, round about Rome, called the Papal States; and the kingdom of Naples and Sicily to the south of them. To the east there is Poland between the Empire and Russia, and the kingdom of Hungary, with the Ottoman Turks casting their shadow on it. Farther to the east is Russia, newly developing into a strong State, after it had got rid of the Mongols of the Golden Horde. And to the north and west there are some other countries.

Such was Europe early in the sixteenth century. In 1520 Charles V became Emperor. He was a Hapsburg and, as we have seen, he managed to inherit the kingdoms of Spain, and of Naples and Sicily, and the Netherlands. It is strange how whole countries and peoples changed masters in Europe because of certain royal marriages. Millions of people and great countries were just inherited. Sometimes they were given as dowries. The island of Bombay thus came to an English king, Charles II, as the dowry of his wife Catharine of Braganza (in Portugal). By careful marriage, therefore, the Hapsburgs gathered together an empire, and Charles V became head of this. He was a very ordinary man, chiefly noted for eating enormously, but for the moment his great dominions made him seem a colossus in Europe.

In the same year that Charles became Emperor, Suleiman became head of the Ottoman Empire. During his reign this empire spread in all directions, and especially in eastern Europe. The Turks came right up to the gates of Vienna, but just missed capturing this beautiful old city. But they terrified the Hapsburg Emperor, and he thought it expedient to buy off Suleiman by paying him tribute. Imagine the great Emperor of

the Holy Roman Empire paying tribute to the Sultan of Turkey. Suleiman is known as Suleiman the Magnificent. He took the title of emperor himself, as he considered himself the representative of the Eastern Byzantine Caesars.

There was a great deal of building activity in Constantinople at the time of Suleiman and many beautiful mosques were made. The artistic Renaissance in Italy seems to have had its counterpart in the East also. Not only in Constantinople was there artistic activity, but in Persia and in Khorasan in Central Asia beautiful paintings were being made.

In India we have seen Babar, the Moghal, come down from the north-west and establish a new dynasty. This was in 1526, when Charles V was Emperor in Europe and Suleiman was ruling in Constantinople. We shall have a great deal to say of Babar and his brilliant descendants. It is interesting to note here, however, that Babar was himself a Renaissance type of prince, though a better one than the European type of the period. He was an adventurer, but a gallant knight, with a passion for literature and art. In the Italy of that period there were also princes who were adventurers and lovers of literature and art, and their petty Courts had a superficial brilliance. The Medici family of Florence and the Borgias were famous then. But these Italian princes, and most others in Europe at the time, were true followers of Machiavelli, unscrupulous, intriguing, and despotic, using the poison cup and the dagger of the assassin for their opponents. It is hardly fair to compare the knightly Babar with this crowd, just as it would be out of place to compare their petty Courts with the Court of the Moghal emperors at Delhi or Agra—Akbar and Shah Jahan and others. It is said that these Moghal Courts were magnificent, and were perhaps the richest and most splendid that have ever existed.

We have drifted, almost unawares, to India from Europe. But I wanted you to realize what was happening in India and elsewhere during the days of the European Renaissance. There was artistic activity then in Turkey and Persia and Central Asia and India. In China these were the peaceful and prosperous days of the Mings, when a high level of artistic production was reached. But all this art of the Renaissance period, except perhaps in China, was more or less courtly art. It was not an art of the people. In Italy, after the great artists, some of whose names I have mentioned, passed away, the later Renaissance art became trivial and unimportant.

So Europe in the sixteenth century was divided up between Catholic and Protestant princes. Princes counted then, not their people. Italy,

Austria, France, and Spain were Catholic; Germany half Catholic and half Protestant; England Protestant simply because her King chose to be so. And because England was Protestant, this was enough reason for Ireland, whom England tried to conquer and oppress, to remain Catholic. But it is not quite correct to say that the religion of the people did not matter. It did matter in the end, and many a war and revolution took place because of it. It is difficult to separate the religious aspect from the political and the economic. I think I have told you already that the Protestant revolt against Rome took place especially where the new trading class was becoming strong. We can thus see that there was a connection between religion and trade. Again, many of the princes were afraid of the religious reformation because they thought that under cover of it there might be civil revolution and their authority might be overthrown. If a man was prepared to challenge the religious authority of the Pope, why, then he might also challenge the political authority of the king or prince. This was dangerous doctrine for the kings. They still clung to the divine right of their kind to rule. Even the Protestant princes were not prepared to give this up.

And yet, in spite of the Reformation, kings were all-powerful in Europe. At no previous period were they so autocratic. Previously the great feudal nobles checked them, and often challenged their authority. The merchants and *bourgeoisie* did not like these nobles; neither did the king. So with the help of the merchant class, as well as the peasantry, the king crushed the nobles, and became all-powerful. The *bourgeoisie*, although they had grown in power and importance, were not strong enough yet to check the king. But soon the middle classes began to object to many things that the king did. In particular, they objected to repeated and heavy taxation, and to interference in religion. The king did not like this at all. He was annoyed at their presumption in objecting to anything that he did. So he put them in gaol and punished them otherwise. There was arbitrary imprisonment, just as there is today in India because we refuse to submit to the British Government. The king also interfered with trade. All this made matters worse and resistance to the king grew. This fight of the *bourgeoisie* for power against the autocracy of the kings lasted many hundred years, till recent times, and many a king's head had to fall before the idea of the divine right of kings was finally buried, and kings were put in their proper places. In some countries the victory was won early, in others later. We shall follow the fortunes of the fight in subsequent letters.

But in the sixteenth century the king was boss almost everywhere in

Europe—almost, but not quite. You will remember that in Switzerland the poor peasants of the mountains had dared to defy the great Hapsburg monarch and had won their freedom. So, in the European sea of absolutism and autocracy, the little peasant republic of Switzerland stood out as an island where kings had no place.

Soon matters came to a head in another place—the Netherlands—and the fight for popular and religious liberty was fought out and won. It is a little country, but it was a great fight against the greatest Power in Europe then—Spain. Thus the Netherlands gave a lead to Europe. Then came a struggle for popular freedom in England which cost a king his head and gave the victory to the Parliament of the day. The Netherlands and England thus took the lead in these struggles of the bourgeoisie against autocracy. And because the bourgeoisie won in these countries, it was able to take advantage of the new conditions and forge ahead of other countries. Both built powerful navies later; both developed trade with distant countries; and both laid the foundations of empire in Asia.

We have not said much about England so far in these letters. There was little to say, as England was not a very important country in Europe. But a change takes place now and, as we shall see, England rapidly forges ahead. We have referred to the Magna Carta and the early beginnings of Parliament, and to the peasant troubles and civil wars between different dynasties. During these wars murder and assassination by the kings were common enough. Large numbers of the feudal nobles died in the battles, and thus their class lost its strength. A new dynasty—the Tudors—came to the throne, and they played the autocrat well enough. Henry VIII was a Tudor. So was his daughter, Elizabeth.

After the Emperor Charles V, the Empire split up. Spain and the Netherlands went to his son Philip II. Spain at the time towered over Europe as the most powerful monarchy. You will remember that it possessed Peru and Mexico, and gold poured from the Americas. But, in spite of Columbus and Cortés and Pizarro, Spain could not take advantage of the new conditions. It was not interested in trade. All that it cared for was religion of the most bigoted and cruel kind. All over the country the Inquisition flourished and the most horrible tortures were inflicted on so-called heretics. From time to time great public festivals were arranged when batches of these “heretics”, men and women, were burned alive on huge pyres in the presence of the king and royal family and ambassadors and thousands of people. *Autos-da-fé*, acts of faith, these public burnings were called. Terrible and monstrous all this seems. The whole history of Europe of this period is so full of violence and horrible

and barbarous cruelty and religious bigotry as to be almost unbelievable. The Empire of Spain did not last long. The gallant fight of little Holland shook it up thoroughly. A little later, in 1588, an attempt to conquer England failed miserably, and the "Invincible Armada" which carried the Spanish troops never even reached England. It was wrecked on the high seas. This is not surprising, as the man in command of the Armada knew nothing about ships or the sea. Indeed, he went to King Philip II and "humbly requested His Majesty to relieve him from the post, for, he said, he knew nothing of sea strategy and, moreover, was a bad sailor. But the King answered that the fleet would be led by the Lord Himself!"

So gradually the Empire of Spain faded away. In the days of Charles V it was said that the sun never set on his empire, a saying which is often repeated about another proud and overbearing empire today.

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## THE NETHERLANDS FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

August 27, 1932

I told you in my last letter how kings became supreme, almost all over Europe, in the sixteenth century. In England there were the Tudors, in Spain and Austria the Hapsburgs. In Russia and in great parts of Germany and Italy there were autocratic monarchs. France was perhaps typical of this kind of king ruling through a personal monarchy, the whole kingdom being considered almost the personal property of the king. A very able minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, helped in strengthening France and her monarchy. France has always thought that her strength and security lay in the weakness of Germany. So Richelieu, who was a great Catholic priest, and who crushed Protestants mercilessly in France, actually encouraged Protestants in Germany. This was intended to encourage mutual conflict and disorder in Germany, and thus to weaken her. This policy met with great success. There was, as we shall see, civil war of the worst kind in Germany, which ruined her.

In France also there was civil war in the middle of the seventeenth century—the war of the Fronde it is called. But the King crushed both