

**HISTORICAL TALES:
THE ROMANCE OF
REALITY, ENGLISH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649752225

Historical Tales: The Romance of Reality, English by Charles Morris

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CHARLES MORRIS

**HISTORICAL TALES:
THE ROMANCE OF
REALITY, ENGLISH**



Connoisseur's Edition

Historical Tales,

The Romance of Reality,



English

By

CHARLES MORRIS

AUTHOR OF

"HALF-HOURS WITH THE BEST
AMERICAN AUTHORS," "TALES
FROM THE DRAMATISTS," ETC.

THE R. H. WHITTEN COMPANY

NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES

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HOW ENGLAND BECAME CHRISTIAN.

ONE day, in the far-off sixth century, a youthful deacon of the Roman Church walked into the slave-market of Rome, situated at one extremity of the ancient Forum. Gregory, his name; his origin from an ancient noble family, whose genealogy could be traced back to the days of the early Cæsars. A youth was this of imperial powers of mind, one who, had he lived when Rome was mistress of the physical world, might have become emperor; but who, living when Rome had risen to lordship over the spiritual world, became pope,—the famous Gregory the Great.

In the Forum the young deacon saw that which touched his sympathetic soul. Here cattle were being sold; there, men. His eyes were specially attracted by a group of youthful slaves, of aspect such as he had never seen before. They were bright of complexion, their hair long and golden, their expression of touching innocence. Their fair faces were strangely unlike the embrowned complexions to which he had been accustomed, and he stood looking at them in admiration, while the slave-dealers extolled their beauty of face and figure.

"From what country do these young men come?" asked Gregory.

"They are English, Angles," answered the dealers.

"Not Angles, but angels," said the deacon, with a feeling of poetic sentiment, "for they have angel-like faces. From what country come they?" he repeated.

"They come from Deira," said the merchants.

"*De irá,*" he rejoined, fervently; "ay, plucked from God's ire and called to Christ's mercy. And what is the name of their king?"

"Ella," was the answer.

"Alleluia shall be sung there!" cried the enthusiastic young monk, his imagination touched by the significance of these answers. He passed on, musing on the incident which had deeply stirred his sympathies, and considering how the light of Christianity could be shed upon the pagan lands whence these fair strangers came.

It was a striking picture which surrounded that slave-market. From where the young deacon stood could be seen the capitol of ancient Rome and the grand proportions of its mighty Coliseum; not far away the temple of Jupiter Stator displayed its magnificent columns, and other stately edifices of the imperial city came within the circle of vision. Rome had ceased to be the mistress of the world, but it was not yet in ruins, and many of its noble edifices still stood almost in perfection. But paganism had vanished. The cross of Christ was the dominant symbol. The march of the warriors of the legions was replaced by long processions of cowled and

solemn monks. The temporal imperialism of Rome had ceased, the spiritual had begun; instead of armies to bring the world under the dominion of the sword, that ancient city now sent out its legions of monks to bring it under the dominion of the cross.

Gregory resolved to be one of the latter. A fair new field for missionary labor lay in that distant island, peopled by pagans whose aspect promised to make them noble subjects of Christ's kingdom upon earth. The enthusiastic youth left Rome to seek Saxon England, moved thereto not by desire of earthly glory, but of heavenly reward. But this was not to be. His friends deemed that he was going to death, and begged the pope to order his return. Gregory was brought back and England remained pagan.

Years went by. The humble deacon rose to be bishop of Rome and head of the Christian world. Gregory the Great, men named him, though he styled himself "Servant of the Lord's servants," and lived in like humility and simplicity of style as when he was a poor monk.

The time at length came to which Gregory had looked forward. Ethelbert, king of Kentish England, married Bertha, daughter of the French king Charibert, a fervent Christian woman. A few priests came with her to England, and the king gave them a ruined Christian edifice, the Church of St. Martin, outside the walls of Canterbury, for their worship. But it was overshadowed by a pagan temple, and the worship of Odin and Thor still dominated Saxon England