

**AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE SOURCES
RELATING TO THE
GERMANIC INVASIONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649217342

An introduction to the sources relating to the Germanic invasions by Carlton Huntley Hayes

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CARLTON HUNTLEY HAYES

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GERMANIC INVASIONS

BY
CARLTON HUNTLEY HAYES, A. M.
Lecturer in History in Columbia University

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



1909

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PREFACE

THE following pages are an outgrowth of a course on the dissolution of the Roman Empire which the author pursued at Columbia University during the academic year 1905-1906 under the direction of Professor James Harvey Robinson. The study centered chiefly about what was evidently the most fateful factor in the process of the disruption of the empire,—the entrance of the Germans; and it occurred to the writer that the story of barbarian immigration might be conveniently culled from the sources, done into English, and presented frankly with full confession of the obscurity, the frequent contradictions, and the fragmentary character of the narratives, and without imaginative reconstructions or interpretations. But after two years' study of the long list of sources, it became apparent that the complete fruition of such an undertaking would be the result only of a labor of many years. Accordingly it has been thought expedient at this time to publish a review of precisely what are the most important sources relating to the Germans from Cæsar's "Commentaries" and Plutarch's "Life of Marius" down to Paul the Deacon's "History of the Lombards," together with extracts, translated into English, illustrative of their general character and relative merit.

"Germanic Invasions" has been selected as a convenient term to designate all the movements by which Germans and other northern peoples came within the borders of the Roman commonwealth: it includes peaceful immigration, whether individual or tribal, marauding expeditions, settlements fixed by treaty, armed invasions, even entrance as

soldiers or slaves of the empire,—in a word, every manner by which a barbarian of the north came into immediate contact with Roman institutions and Roman civilization. Thus it embraces the armed invasion and attempted settlement of northern tribes over a hundred years before Christ and all the subsequent Germanic movements down through the fifth and sixth centuries, which witnessed migrations of entire peoples, repeated sacks of Rome, and the establishment of practically independent "kingdoms" on the soil of the empire. The principal sources for the eighth century, when the barbarians were extensively and permanently settled in their new homes, provide a suitable stopping-point for the review, although the expeditions of the Northmen, Slavs, and Hungarians in the tenth and eleventh centuries might almost be reckoned among the "Germanic Invasions."

The sources under review are exclusively Latin or Greek. The early Germans themselves left no records, not a book, not an inscription, not a monument. The epic poems, the sagas and the songs, of Scandinavia and Germany, were mediaeval, not ancient. Their old traditions and customs were recorded solely by natives of the Mediterranean region, foreigners to them. And, as Fustel de Coulanges has said, What should we know of the Egyptians if we derived everything from Greek sources?

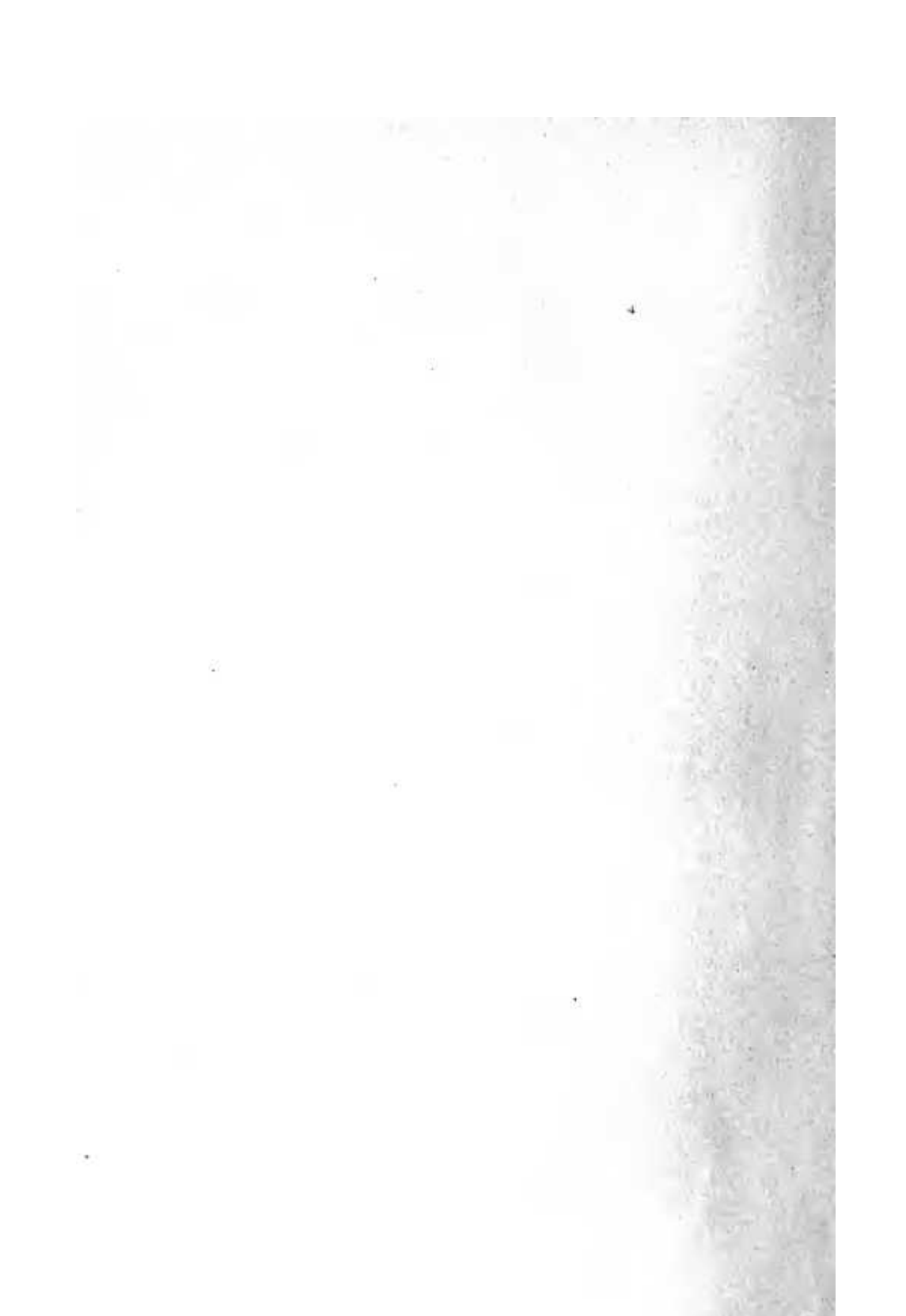
Then too, the sources for the period are mainly narrative. The documentary sources, which should accompany and check personal impressions, are difficult to understand and in the past have been a subject of special investigation by lawyers rather than by historians: it is hardly possible in a summary of this kind to give them the prominence they deserve. Further, the limits of the present work have excluded altogether the scant monumental sources relating to the Germanic invasions.

The apology for this slender review, which the writer presents with considerable diffidence, is its uniqueness. Histories of classical literature treat usually of but a small part of the field here covered, and their comments on the historical are almost invariably choked by their appreciations of the purely literary. On the other hand, the great guides to the general sources of the middle age—Potthast, Molinier, Wattenbach, Ebert, Gross—hardly go back of the reign of Theodosius the Great. If the present work prove in any way useful or suggestive as a brief outline of our chief sources of information about the Germanic Invasions, and an *introduction* to a more careful and painstaking study on specific points, it will have accomplished every desired end.

The author is under obligations in one way or another to those mentioned in the footnotes or in the final bibliography, and he has made use of the indicated translations while often assuming the liberty to amend them. To Professor James Harvey Robinson of Columbia University, the writer owes the greatest debt: Professor Robinson has been his guide throughout his graduate work as well as the father and designer of this work and has repeatedly suggested many helpful ideas, the poor expression of which is the writer's. To Professor James Thomson Shotwell of Columbia University, who also has given valuable and helpful counsel and has sacrificed many hours to the tiresome task of reading copy and proof, the author is under special obligations.

C. H. H.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, MAY, 1909.



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