

**THE NORMO-SAXON,  
OR ROMANCE OF  
ENGLISH HISTORY**

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The Normo-Saxon, or Romance of English History by Alexander D. Penfold

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A ROMANCE OF ENGLISH HISTORY

BY

ALEXANDER D. PENFOLD

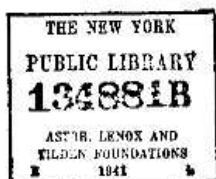


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## THE NORMO-SAXON

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### CHAPTER I

**I**N an epoch almost cut in twain by the advent of Alexander the Great and Napoleon, came Charlemagne the Greater—greater because, while the first two waged cruel and merciless wars, marked by unstemmed victories and the blight of human hopes, Charlemagne, equally successful in arms, left in his trail from the Rhone to the Danube law, order, civilization, and Christianity, instead of chaos and desolation,—a Christianity, too, stripped of some of its superstition and much of its outward show, replaced by no uncertain quantity of the primitive teachings of Christ.

These changes in religious matters, however, were not made without more than a modest protest from the Roman Pontiff, as well as the dissenting voice of the principal of Charlemagne's own great school

of learning. Viewing him from every side of his greatness, one conclusion only can be reached, that he was an instrument in the hand of Providence to lift the human family to a higher and purer plane of life, to raise the cross in its path and stay the onward march of barbarism, to open the eyes of swarms of lawless humanity and point them the way to Christ.

He also became the agent of an equally great if not a greater work, in using his dauntless armies as a breakwater against the tidal wave of Mohammedanism, which in his day threatened to overrun the whole of Europe.

While Charlemagne planned and carried out with success the most gigantic military campaigns the world ever saw, war was not the achievement for which after generations should honor him most. Before war had claimed much of his time or talent, he had built up within his own court one of the most advanced and liberal schools of learning to be found in all Europe; where not only the word of God in its purity was taught, but where practical knowledge in all branches of government, civil law, culture, and refinement were made special objects of discussion and study. While the doors of this school were thrown wide open to all comers, it was

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no less the great mental and spiritual feeder for every member of the King's court and that of his own family, not one of whom was more punctual and attentive to its teachings than Charlemagne himself, who bitterly felt the neglect of learning in the early years of his own life.

Wherever his military camp was pitched there was found this academy of learning, and no royal command was more rigidly enforced than that no day should pass when the lessons at this school should be neglected. Without regard to nation or rank, men, the most learned as well as the most godly, were sought as teachers of this great cosmopolitan college.

Prompted by such noble aims, it should create no surprise that all Europe soon bowed before this man, and made him Emperor of the West; indeed, it would seem that this crown was placed upon his head by the *Divine Hand* for a *Divine* purpose.

By one of the chances of good fortune, Charlemagne met at Parma, on his way from Rome to England, Alcuin, probably the most profound and brilliant scholar of his time, and prevailed upon him to become the controlling power of his school.

Alcuin was English by birth, and to Egbert, Archbishop of York, he was indebted for that