

**THE HISTORY OF FRANCE:
FROM THE CONQUEST OF
GAUL BY THE ROMANS TO
THE PEACE OF 1856**

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The History of France: From the Conquest of Gaul by the Romans to the Peace of 1856 by
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TO THE PEACE OF 1856.

By AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

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237. c. 66.

PROUD OF THE PERMISSION WHICH ALLOWS ME TO ADD HER
NAME TO MY PAGES, AND PROUDER STILL OF THE
PRIVILEGE WHICH ENABLES ME TO CALL HER

MY FRIEND,

I Dedicate this Little Book,

WITH ALL ADMIRATION AND AFFECTION,

TO

MATILDA M. HAYS.

PREFACE.

A WORK so brief as the present is not often found to require an introduction; but, in this instance, the task of authorship has been accompanied by so many disadvantages that I am tempted to entreat a momentary hearing. Expressly limited by the publisher in the all-important item of space, I found myself pledged to compress within the narrow limits of six sheets an amount of matter that might well have occupied three or four octavo volumes. It will be seen at a glance that no work can be in every respect improved by treatment so rapid. The historian who is pressed for time perforce renounces much that is merely entertaining. He may seldom venture into the fascinating regions of anecdote, and he must never suffer his wandering inclinations to follow the fairy footsteps of Romance. On the other hand he has to steer clear of the opposite evils of condensation, and avoid lapsing into a meagre chronology of events. I have endeavoured to fulfil these conditions; but with what success it is not for me to determine. The main object is, at all events, gained. A history with which our English students and general readers are too little acquainted, is offered to them in a volume so small that its contents may be acquired in a single evening; and I think I may venture to hope that not even the most impatient will refuse to travel with me in three hours through four-and-twenty centuries of time. If, then, this little book of facts should prove to be a friend as well as an authority—should be found truthful, readable, and concise—should lead one reflecting mind to follow in a wider field the rise and progress of a nation so nearly related to us in geographical position, so interwoven with the triumphs and disasters of our own chronicles, so incorporated with our commercial interests, and so lately allied with us in a just and generous cause—then, indeed, the hope by which I have been animated while writing it will be more than fulfilled.

AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

THE
HISTORY OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE ROMAN CONQUEST TO THE EXTINCTION OF THE MEROVINGIAN AND CARLOVINGIAN DYNASTIES.

(B.C. 194--A.D. 987.)

THE early history of that delightful territory known to the ancients as Gallia, or the country of the Gauls, is so obscurely narrated, and is derived, moreover, from sources so remote, as to prefer but little claim upon our time or our credulity. Bounded by the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the ocean, it was, by reason of its situation, subject to perpetual invasions, and colonized by various peoples. The Iberians, the Phocians, the Cimbric, and the Belgæ, successively overran the land, established themselves in certain districts, founded cities, and introduced religions. These, in their turn, emigrated when the resources of the country were no longer equal to their support; carried fire and sword beyond the Alps, and poured into Germany, North Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor. Thus Gallia received and rendered back her population, and colonized Europe. About one hundred and twenty-four years before Christ, having recruited their forces at the termination of the Punic wars, the Romans made a descent upon that coast which lies between the Alps and the Rhone; founded a settlement at Aix; took possession of the district as a Latin province, and gave to it the name of Provence. It was not, however, till fifty years before Christ, that Julius Cæsar brought the rest of the country under the Roman yoke

and established military government. From this time may be dated the civilization of Gaul. With the encouragement of agriculture, the distribution of justice, and the leisure of peace, not only the national mind, but the soil itself, became enriched and ameliorated. The vine and olive were brought thither and naturalized; the ancient Celtic tongue, refined by an admixture of the Latin, was moulded into the Romanesque dialect; bridges, aqueducts, amphitheatres, and cities were erected; and the consolations of Christianity were bestowed by the conquerors in return for rights ceded to them by the conquered. Thus two centuries elapsed, and dependence brought prosperity to Gaul. In the year 260, certain barbarian tribes of Germany ventured to harass the Rhenish frontier, but were repulsed and driven homeward by the Roman legions. The most formidable among these invaders were the Franks, a people noted for their love of liberty and ambition of conquest. So long, however, as the strength of Rome continued undiminished, her provinces received ample and ready protection. But that great empire approached its decline, and, falling, proved the destruction of countless tributaries. Exhausted by repeated levies of men and money, Gaul sank, towards the commencement of the fifth century, into so wretched a condition, that, when the warrior-nations who had long threatened her boundaries, united together in one overwhelming league and spread like a destructive torrent throughout the length and breadth of the land, nothing remained for her inhabitants but a feeble defence, flight, captivity, and submission. This invasion took place A.D. 406; and henceforth, for seventy years, the Vandals, the Huns, the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Franks, the Alans, and fifteen or twenty other tribes, continued to struggle for possession of the country. In 476, when order was in some degree restored, the district of Armorica had alone escaped with freedom. The Burgundians then established themselves in the east—the Visigoths took possession of a district lying between the Loire and the Pyrenees—a colony of Saxons settled in Lower Normandy—the Vandals passed on into

Spain—and the Franks, under the rule of Pharamond and Merovée, made themselves masters of a large territory that extended from Gallia Belgica to the river Somme, and had for its capital the city of Treves.

Fabulous as are the chronicles of this period, it is, however, certain that the Franks, albeit the least civilized of the war-pers, became in time a powerful race; extended their conquests to the banks of the Loire; and were governed, somewhere about the year 485, by a Christian king named Clovis, who was the grandson of Merovée, and principal founder of the French monarchy.

It must be confessed that Christianity produced no beneficial effect upon these wild converts. On the contrary, it appeared only to increase the ferocity of their dispositions; and Clovis, who received from his clergy the title of Most Christian King, has left a reputation stained by every crime. It was during the reign of this monarch that the Court removed to Paris. Clovis died in the year 511, after having secured to the Franks all that district which lies between the Rhine, the Rhone, the ocean, and the Pyrenees. The city of Paris, destined afterwards to become the most elegant of modern capitals, was at this time confined to the narrow limits of the Isle de la Cité, and consisted of some few churches and hovels surrounded by a fortification. A palace was situated beyond the walls, on the south bank of the river; the abbey of St. Geneviève, St. Germain L'Auxerrois, St. Germain-des-Près, and others, were scattered about the vicinity; and the grounds in the neighbourhood of the river, having been partially cleared of their primeval forests, were planted with vineyards and fig-trees.

The successors of Clovis, called the Merovingian kings, continued to rule over the Franks for nearly two centuries and a half. The history of this interval is, perhaps, the most painful upon record. License, barbarity, and crime, were the title-deeds by which each monarch held his crown. The ties of blood and the claims of military honour were alike disregarded; and civil discord impoverished alike the people and

the country. To add to the intricacy of these old chronicles, the kingdom was frequently shared, according to the Frankish laws of inheritance, between all the sons of a former sovereign; so that two, three, and sometimes four kings were reigning, disputing, and fighting together. Repeated assassinations, and that imbecility which is the consequence of a degeneracy in morals and manners, reduced the race of Clovis to a weak line of princes, who took no part in the actual government of the kingdom, but pass like a procession of puppets across the stage of history. From this time the substance of authority was vested in the hands of the Mayors of the Palace, officers who held the rank of chief judge and steward of the household, and whose dignity was second only to that of the sovereign. Bestowed sometimes by the aristocracy and sometimes by the king, this mayoralty at last became hereditary in the family of Pepin d'Heristhal, who stood in much the same relation to the later Merovingians as did the Earl of Warwick to Henry of Lancaster, and Edward, Earl of March; or as Dupleix, when governor of Pondicherry, to Mirzapha Jung and Chunda Sahib. He placed six princes successively upon the throne, reserving to himself every power and privilege of royalty, and suffering the nominal monarchs to be seen only once in every year, at the great annual meeting of Frank nobility, called the *mallum*, or *Champ de Mars*. Prisoners at all other times, they were exhibited with great pomp on these occasions, and repaired to the assembly clothed in regal robes, crowned, and drawn by oxen. These kings are called in history the *rois fainçants*; and sometimes, from the flowing hair which the descendants of Clovis were alone permitted to wear, the *rois chevelures*. Pepin d'Heristhal died in 714, after having reigned for more than twenty-seven years over country and kings. He was succeeded in his office by his son Charles Martel, a man of great energy and courage, who kept the Franks engaged in frequent warfare, and gallantly expelled the Saracens from Aquitaine in the year 732. Thierry IV., last of the Merovingian *fainçants*, died in 737, and Charles, who would not in his own person