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Stories of the Nations

by Lorene Lambert

Volume 2

From Count Bismarck to
Queen Elizabeth II (1850—2012)

*Enjoy this feast of stories
from world history.*

This book is the story of the lives and acts of the people now living on the earth and of their fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers. It should be of interest to all of us on that account. The story of the nations is a wonderful one in every way, and I am sure you will agree with me when you have read this book through.

That is all I have to say here. One cannot say everything in an introduction. And none of you, when you are invited to a good dinner, care much to be told what is on the table. You would rather find out for yourselves. So with these few words I throw open the doors of the dining hall, and let you in to the feast of good things which has been prepared for you.

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Stories of the Nations

Volume 2: From Count Bismarck to Queen Elizabeth II

by Lorene Lambert

With additional material from *The Child's Story of the Nations* by Charles Morris,
originally published in 1901

Stories of the Nations, Volume 2: From Count Bismarck to Queen Elizabeth II

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A Few Words with My Young Friends

No one can know what history means, or what the progress of the world has been, unless he knows a great deal about the recent centuries. We call them Early Modern and Modern Times. They have been centuries of invention. Years ago men did the most of their work with their hands; now they do the most of it with machines. They have been centuries of science. Years ago men knew very little about the great forces and forms of the universe; now they know a great deal about electricity and light and heat and a hundred other things. They have been centuries of progress in human liberty. The slaves of hundreds of years ago are free today, and the people of the nations have far more liberty than they had in the past ages.

The recent centuries have been crowded with marvels, full of great events and wonderful discoveries. They have had their triumphs of war and their greater triumphs of peace; their great warriors and their greater statesmen; their great doers and their greater thinkers. Man's hands have been busy, but his brain has been busier, and the triumphs of the recent centuries are the triumphs of the mind.

I hope the readers of this little book understand what I have just said. If any part of it is not clear to them they must read on to the end to learn what it all means.

The stories of the nations are stories of people who were living on the Earth during the days of our grandfathers, and their fathers, and their fathers' fathers before them. Some of the stories are long and some are short, but all of them are stories of real

people—their lives and their acts and how they affected all those around them. Of course I cannot tell about every person who lived on the earth, but I hope this little history—and the one that comes before it by the same name—will help you feel that you know some of them.

That is all I have to say here. One cannot say everything in an introduction. And none of you, when you are invited to a good dinner, care much to be told what is on the table. You would rather find out for yourselves. So with these few words I throw open the doors of the dining hall, and let you in to the feast of good things which has been prepared for you.

Chapter 1

The Modern World

If I were to say to you, “We live in the modern world,” would you agree with me? After all, fast automobiles crowd our streets; jet airplanes soar through our skies; satellites circle our globe, beaming their signals here and there; and clever computers help everything in our world to run smoothly.

So are you and I “modern” people just because we live in a world that is filled with gleaming machines? In Noah Webster’s dictionary, he tells us that “modern” means something that is “pertaining to the present time, or time not long past.” So perhaps the idea of the modern world actually has a lot to do with time and history. Perhaps we are modern because of all that has gone before.

Historians say that the modern world really began in the eighteenth century, when people began using steam engines and coal-fired furnaces. Railroad tracks were built, crisscrossing the countryside, and suddenly people could move about much more quickly. They were no longer tied to their little villages, walking or riding on horseback when they wished to go somewhere. Large factories powered by steam and coal arose, and workers streamed into the cities to work in the factories, leaving the farms in the country behind. The cities grew larger, with many new needs, and more inventions appeared to solve those problems. As the nineteenth century progressed, the telephone, electric lights, the

automobile, the airplane, and the refrigerator were created, all to help cities and businesses run more smoothly and make life easier for the many people living there.

Every time a scientist or an inventor devised something new, other scientists learned from it and built upon it. The pace of scientific learning grew faster, and the inventions came along at a greater and greater rate, because each new breakthrough created the opportunity for dozens more. And the news of these discoveries was flashed around the world more quickly than ever before in history, because now it was possible for a man living in Paris, France, to pick up a newspaper and read about something that had happened in New York City just a few days before. The modern world became a smaller place, because telephones and telegraphs, television and radio made it so.

As the cities grew larger, and the inventions more wondrous, the nations grew more wealthy and powerful, and more determined to keep and perhaps even expand their power. Instead of kings, most countries came to be ruled by presidents and prime ministers, and also dictators. Some of these leaders were good and wise, but some were terrible, eager to spread their evil beyond the borders of their own nations. From their actions, the smoke of war would arise to shadow the life of every person on earth.

We are modern people because we live in a world filled with cities, where science rushes forward and new inventions appear every year. Our world is small because we can know at the touch of a computer key what is happening anywhere on the globe and then talk about it with friends next door and far away. We live in powerful nations who guard their influence and mastery jealously, and who seek ever greater wealth by buying and selling continuously with one another, so that what happens in one of these nations affects all of the others. We are modern because of the history that went before us.

In this book, I will tell you stories of the modern nations, from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These are stories

of great things: of science and exploration, of perseverance and courage. But these are also stories of war and conflict, and the grasping desire for power. This is the modern world: are you ready to hear its tales? Then turn to the next page with me, and let us begin!

Chapter 2

How Bismarck Made an Empire

by Charles Morris

In the year 1800 there was a German people, but no German nation. There was only a collection of little kingdoms, each with its own proud prince. If you were to fling down a pane of glass, splintering it into many fragments—some large, some medium sized, and some small,—so Germany seemed to have been thrown down on the map of Europe and splintered into bits. In the south was one great piece called the Empire of Austria. In the north was another piece not so large called the Kingdom of Prussia. Then there were medium pieces called Saxony and Bavaria. After them came smaller pieces, and then a large number of tiny bits, some of them not much larger than a corn farm in Nebraska. There were more than three hundred of these states, some of which looked as if you might pick them up and put them in your pocket. They had their rulers, and their capitals, and their armies—if you call that an army which is made up of a drummer, a general, and a dozen or two men.

For many centuries these German states had been joined together in what was called the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.” They pretended to keep up the old Empire of Rome, but in truth they were like so many beads on a string. Do you remember learning of the great conqueror Napoleon? He cut

the string and away went the beads: he put an end to the Holy Roman Empire. He joined many of the small states together and gave some of the little ones to the large ones, so that when he got through, instead of more than three hundred, there were only thirty-nine.

Two of these, Austria and Prussia, were powerful nations. In the year 1862, the king of Prussia died and a new king came to the throne, under the name of Wilhelm I. One of the first things King Wilhelm did was to choose for his minister the ablest man in Germany, Count Otto von Bismarck. Now this Bismarck was very much like Cardinal Richelieu in France, about whom you may have read. You might remember that Richelieu was the true power in France, and made King Louis great. In Prussia, it was Count Bismarck who stood behind the throne and held all the power, and if it had not been for him, history would have very little to say about the great Emperor Wilhelm of Germany. It was Bismarck who made a big emperor out of a little king.

Bismarck was a very able man, but he was also a tyrant. When he said yes, King Wilhelm never said no. He made laws without asking the parliament. He laid taxes, formed treaties with foreign nations, and did everything very much as he pleased. And what he was most pleased to do was to make Prussia powerful, the most powerful nation in Europe.

So Prussia began to drill soldiers, and collect guns and powder and shot, and invent new weapons of war, until its army got to be the strongest in Europe. Then Prussia went to war with Denmark and took a large piece of land from that little kingdom. A short while later, a dispute arose between Prussia and Austria, and at once Bismarck declared war. It was one of the shortest wars in history. In a few weeks, Austria was completely beaten, and Prussia became the great power in Germany.

Now we must shift our eyes away from Prussia for just a moment and look over toward France. Do you remember learning about Louis Napoleon? You have probably read about the blunder

that Napoleon made when he tried to start an empire in Mexico, and how quickly he got out when the United States told him to go. This blunder made him very unpopular indeed with his own people, and he began to fear that they would topple him off his throne.

There was one way to put them in good humor again, and that was to go to war and win great victories. Thoughtfully, his eye turned toward Germany. If he could only defeat the Prussians, who had defeated the Austrians, it would make him a greater man than ever. Louis Napoleon thought he had a very fine army, and he had a new kind of gun which could throw twenty-five musket balls at once. He fancied that with his soldiers and his machine gun he could make as short work with Prussia as that country had done with Austria. As for the thousands of men who would be killed and wounded, and the families which would be ruined and thrown into misery and despair by a war, that did not seem to trouble him. He thought a great deal more of himself and his power than of the people of France and Germany.

Of course, I am talking here about something that I only guess at. We do not often know the secret thoughts in the brains of kings and emperors, and can judge of what they think only by what they do. What Louis Napoleon seemed to do was to look around him for some excuse for a war, something to fight about. What reason could he find to start a war with Prussia? He found one in Spain, which just then had no king and which had offered its throne to a cousin of the royal family of Prussia, named Leopold. He accepted it, as was very natural, since such an offer does not often present itself.

For Louis Napoleon, here was an excuse for war, ready-made: he did not want to see a Prussian on the Spanish throne. He sent word to King Wilhelm of Prussia that he must not let Prince Leopold accept the crown of Spain. King Wilhelm sent word back that he had nothing to do with it, and that Leopold was his own master and free to do what he pleased. When Leopold

heard of all this uproar he drew back and said he would not have the throne of Spain. That ought to have ended the whole business, and it would, if Napoleon had not wanted a war. As it was, he wrote to King Wilhelm that it was not right to let Leopold accept the throne without consulting him and his cabinet. King Wilhelm replied that he had nothing more to say, and that he would not stop Prince Leopold from doing what he pleased in the matter. That was enough. Napoleon had found the excuse he wanted. He at once declared war against Prussia.

I have used the name of King Wilhelm, but the fact is that those answers came from Count Bismarck. The king danced when Bismarck played the fiddle. And when the war began, it was not the king who fought it, but a great general named Helmuth von Moltke, who could handle an army better than any man in Europe. As for the emperor Louis Napoleon, he blindly went to war without knowing what he was about. His uncle, the great Napoleon, knew all about his army; the little Napoleon knew nothing about his. The war minister told him that all was ready, and that “not a single button was wanting on a single gaiter.” In fact, nothing was ready, and there was a good deal more wanting than gaiter buttons. It was only in the Prussian army that everything was ready and not a button was missing.

The French were as ignorant of the state of affairs as the emperor. “On to Berlin!” they shouted, flinging their hats into the air. They were full of high spirits. They said that in a few days they would be across the borders, and in a few weeks they would be in the Prussian capital, and then King Wilhelm and Count Bismarck would be glad to beg for peace. But in fact they did not cross the border at all, they did not set foot on German territory, and the German army marched into Paris instead of the French army into Berlin.

When the French army reached the frontier, what did they see? There was the German army ready to meet them, moving like clockwork, every wheel of it fitting neatly into another wheel.

General Moltke was too old to march at the head of the army, but he laid out all the plans so finely that it was said he had only to strike a bell and everything went as he wished. That was not the way with the French. There was no clockwork about their army. They were brave enough, but they had no great leader, no fine organization, no large supplies, and there was confusion in all their movements. They had gone to war blindly and would soon pay the price.

Louis Napoleon marched with his army, his heart full of pride and hope. The telegraph lines were all ready to carry back the news of his victories to Paris. King Wilhelm was with his army, too, quite as confident, and with more reason. The two armies met on August 2, 1870, and within a week four battles had been fought. In the first the French met with a little success, and the wires took to Paris the story of a brilliant victory. After that they had nothing but the tale of defeat to carry.

On August 6th there was a terrible battle at a place called Worth. It lasted fifteen hours, and the French were defeated and had to retreat. But they had not gone far before the Germans were ahead of them, cutting them off. Then two more battles were fought. On August 16th the two armies met at a place called Gravelotte, the Germans with 200,000 men, the French with 140,000. Here was fought the greatest battle of the war. The armies struggled face-to-face all day long. Both sides were brave and resolute. The French held their ground and died like heroes. The Germans dashed on them and died like heroes. For nine hours the terrible conflict went on, and 40,000 men fell dead or wounded on the bloody field. Then the French general gave it up and withdrew his men to the strong city of Metz. He had fought bravely but had failed. The Germans surrounded Metz and held him there. In this way half the French army was shut up in a cage.

There was another army, about 140,000 men, that was with Louis Napoleon. They tried to reach Metz and help their fellow French soldiers, but Moltke laid his plans to stop them. He drove

the French back, and at the end of August they gathered around a fortress named Sedan, on the Belgian frontier of France. It was just the sort of place Moltke wanted to get them in. He laughed when he saw them there. “The trap is closed and the mouse in it,” he said.

The German army spread out till they surrounded the French, and poured on them such a hailstorm of shot and shell that the valley was filled with dead and wounded. The French fought with their old courage, but they could not get out, and they were killed in multitudes. In the end the whole army had to surrender. On the 2nd of September, just one month after the first fight, an army of 83,000 men became prisoners of war, and with them was Louis Napoleon.

Two days afterwards Louis Napoleon ceased to be emperor. A meeting was held in Paris, a new government was formed, the emperor was deposed, and a republic was established. This was a revolution, though it was finished in a day and without a shot being fired or a drop of blood shed. There have not been many revolutions like that.

The war went on, but France had no chance to win. On October 30th the French army in Metz surrendered. Then the Germans gathered around Paris and besieged that great city. Here the French made their last strong fight. They held out for four months, until the people were so hungry that they had to eat the animals in the zoological garden. They gave up when there was nothing more to eat. Soon all the armies of France were dispersed, all its fortresses were captured, and the Germans were masters of France. Louis Napoleon’s war had proved the greatest blunder of his life, for it ruined his country and ended his reign.

There is one more thing of great importance to speak about—“How Bismarck made an Empire.” What that great statesman wished to do was to restore the old German Empire and put Prussia at its head. This he had long worked for; now the time had come to finish his task. North Germany was united with Prussia; he got

the South German states to enter into the same union, and to form an empire with King Wilhelm at its head.

His great work was finished at Versailles, the royal city of France, on the 18th of January, 1871. It was done with the utmost splendor and show, and when the crown of the empire was put on the head of the new emperor, Wilhelm I of Germany, there was such a shout as had seldom been heard there before, and the whole great assembly sang the national hymns of Germany. The country of the Germans was divided into the German Empire and the Austrian Empire, and the emperor of Germany was one of the leading monarchs of Europe. To Count Bismarck he owed his power and his fame.

All of Europe was changed now. Germany was powerful and intended to stay that way by whatever means it could. What shall come of Germany's ambitions and thirst for power? A great sorrow, as you shall see in the chapters to come.

Chapter 3

How China Opened Its Doors

by Charles Morris

I think there are times when all of us are tired of learning new things and want to be let alone with the knowledge we already have. That is the way it was with China. During the 1800s, many of the world's nations were drawing ever closer to each other, through trade and art and books, and also through war and fighting, as we have seen in the story of Prussia and France's Louis Napoleon. But the Chinese were proud of their old ways, their old books, their old religions and government and laws, and thought that all the rest of the world had nothing half so good. After all, China had been an old and established kingdom long before the nations of Europe and America had even been conceived. They were mere children beside China. The idea of these young upstarts coming to teach new things to a gray-haired nation which had been rich in learning thousands of years before they were born! Such a thing was too ridiculous to be thought of. That is the way China looked at it, and that is the reason it did not open its arms to the civilization of the West. Its people were proud and self-satisfied.

But even so, China could not keep out the West and its ways.

England was the first of the Western nations to get into China. The British wanted trade, a very bad kind of trade, for English

ships carried opium to China. Opium is a dangerous drug, made from the lovely red blossoms of poppies. It causes the people who smoke it to lose their senses. Many Chinese people became slaves to this terrible drug, willing to commit any crime in order to buy more of it from the British traders, whose ships were anchored in the port of Canton, their holds stuffed with bundles of opium. The emperor of China did not like this; he was horrified by the changes that he saw in his people, and he knew that opium was the cause of much sorrow. So he gave orders that all the opium in Canton should be seized and destroyed, and \$20 million worth of the drug was thrown overboard into the dark water.

This made the English furious. The trade in opium was a very profitable enterprise, and they did not want to lose it! They sent their warships to China and began what is called the Opium War. England was in the wrong, of course, to attack another country over so shameful a thing; but in war the wrong often prevails, if it has the best guns. China was defeated, and was forced to open five of its ports to the world's commerce, and give up to England the large city and fine port of Hong Kong.

This was the first step in the opening of China. Twenty years afterwards another war broke out, in which the British and the French joined. In 1860 they marched to Peking, the capital of China, commanded it to open its gates, and burned the emperor's summer palace, one of the finest buildings in the whole land. Once again, China was forced to accept more of the foreigner's demands. More of China was revealed to the world, more ships were allowed to dock in China's ports, more of the world's trade goods were allowed to be sold in China's markets. In this way the door of China was opened; a little at a time; now a small crack and now a larger crack.

Little by little, foreign things crept in. In 1876 a railroad was built, just a few miles long. The emperor did not like it, but now he was afraid to deal with it as strongly as he had with the opium. He took a safer plan; he bought the railroad with China's own gold,

and then tore up the rails and stored them away. But he could not stop the flood that was coming. The next year a telegraph line was built. This time he could not buy it, and he could not destroy it. Before long, many miles of telegraph wires were crisscrossing China.

There are some nations which nothing but the boom of the cannon and the crack of the rifle can rouse from their long sleep, and China was one of them. In 1894 China entered into a war that I may call a “great awakening,” for it gave the sleeping empire a very hard shake. This war was with Japan, that small island nation separated from China by a thin stretch of ocean called the Sea of Japan. Unlike China, Japan had thrown wide its doors and eagerly accepted the new ideas and methods of the Western nations, and had built up its army with new tactics and fearsome new weapons. Japan was ready for war, and China was not.

This war came out of a quarrel over a nearby kingdom called Korea. It occupied a large peninsula directly between China and Japan, and its rulers were weak and squabbling. It presented an easy target for both China and Japan, and both of them wanted it. Korea was like a bone being fought over by two dogs.

Now, China was like a great mastiff and Japan like a small-sized bulldog. No doubt, the rulers of China thought they would make short work of this impudent little island empire. They might have done so forty years before, but now Japan had an army of well-drilled and well-armed soldiers, trained in the newest ideas, and it made short work of the sleepy colossus. The bulldog got its teeth in the throat of the mastiff and soon shook all the fight out of it. In a very short time little Japan had whipped big China; it might have tried to swallow it if it had not been so very large.

What a shock for China! How could this have happened? How could they have been beaten by a nation so very much smaller than they? It was as if the very smallest boy in a classroom had faced down the biggest bully and forced him to run away! Slowly, a new notion seems to have come into the great brain of China. It

had been thoroughly whipped by a little nation of its own kind. It was clear enough that it had a good deal to learn, and that it must give up some of its stubborn pride. Perhaps the outside world of the foreigners had something to teach, after all.

This lesson was not lost on China. Railroads were no longer forbidden; they began to make their way through the “Celestial Kingdom.” Steamboats plowed the waters for a thousand miles up the great Yangtze River. Foreign engineers began to work the rich coal and iron mines. Factories sprang up in the foreign settlements, with the best modern machinery. Foreign books were translated and read. Missionaries taught the people in hundreds of places. The ambassadors of the nations were admitted to Peking and received in open audience by the emperor. China was giving way to the eager pressure of the Western world.

But it was only the high government officials of China who saw the benefit of this. The great masses of the people were full of ignorance and prejudice, and they hated the Western people bitterly. The best name they had for them was “foreign devils.” Suddenly, in the year 1900, there came an uprising. A secret society of the people, who were called the Boxers, began murdering foreign people wherever they could find them. They entered Peking in multitudes, and many of the soldiers in the Chinese army joined them in a bloodthirsty attack on the embassies and representatives of the foreign nations. Never had such a thing happened before, and the nations of the world sent soldiers to China to prevent this terrible crime. This army marched to Peking and rescued the ambassadors and other foreigners, but they had to fight the Boxer army every step of the way to get there, and the old nation was stirred up as never before. The emperor’s court was fiercely divided between those officials who wished to side with the Boxers and throw all foreigners out of China, and those who believed the Boxers were acting wrongly and must be stopped.

The foreign army was victorious, and the Boxer Rebellion was stopped, but the divided heart of China continued to war with

itself. Accept foreign ways or oppose them? Draw closer to the rest of the world or turn away?

In 1908 the emperor died. He had been a member of the Qing dynasty, which had led China since the days of the great king Kangxi, whom you may remember. The Qing family was no longer great, though, and when the emperor's brother tried to take the throne and rule China, he was unable to succeed. Loud voices throughout China complained bitterly against him, and against the Qing, who had allowed China to be so bitterly defeated by a foreign army. China must be strong again, they cried. China must turn in a new direction!

And so it did. A new leader arose, a man named Sun Yat-sen, who led his followers in an uprising that forced the emperor Puyi to step down off his throne, the last ruler of the Qing Dynasty, the last emperor of China. China was declared to be a republic, and Sun Yat-sen was elected its first president in December of 1911.

In this way did China enter the modern world.