

and is to some extent even now the sale of Relics and Indulgences, and to keep up this trade the people were engulfed into the most abominable superstition, and then swindled in the most painful manner. To write a complete history of this traffic carried on by the Holy Roman Catholic Church would be a gigantic work, and far exceed the limits I must necessarily put to this paper. I can only give a hasty sketch, which, however, will be sufficient to show the enormous extent and the astonishing absurdities of this system of deception.

The priests thoroughly understood human weaknesses and tendencies, and to this they owed their success. They soon found that people are more or less fond of Relics, and the knowledge of this became to them a "gold-mine," which even to the present day has not been exhausted.

Everybody values a relic of some kind, be it a lock of hair of a beloved one, an embroidered letter-case, a dried flower, or a piece of ribbon; likewise it is of great interest to see things which have been used by celebrated persons.

The old Greeks and Romans had their relics, and some of them were almost Roman Catholic in their nature, as, for instance, "The Egg of Leda," and "The Holy Shield Fallen from Heaven." The Hindoos carried on great wars about an enormous tooth supposed to belong to Buddha, and the Mahommedans preserve flags, arms, clothing, the beard; and two teeth of their prophet; and so we find relics among every people.

In the history of the Christian Church, no trace of relics can be discovered until the time of Constantine. It is related of him that during a battle he saw in the heavens a shining cross, with the Greek inscription, "By this sign though shalt conquer." He immediately had a flag made adorned with a cross, and his soldiers, who were mostly Christians, followed it with enthusiasm.

After that event the cross became fashionable, and very soon Helena, the Emperor's mother, is said to have discovered the true cross upon which, more than three hundred years before, Christ was crucified; also the grave in which Christ's